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The unstoppable rise of football's new superstar

PLUS...

Cristiano Ronaldo

Ibrahimovic

Argentina 78

Alex Hleb

TRANSFER SPECIAL

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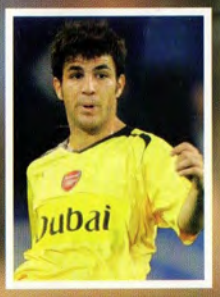
The summer's big moves examined



## Talent snatchers?

How Arsenal snap up the world's best young players

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**SAVE MONEY ON WorldSoccer**
SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER ON PAGE 56

IN A SPORT increasingly dominated by the machinations of high finance and big business, it makes a pleasant change to get back to basics this month and celebrate the talents of a player, Lionel Messi, who has all the makings of a genuine global superstar.

Messi's status as football's most bankable new star has nothing to do with a celebrity lifestyle and everything to do with his footballing talent. There's no new haircut to discuss, no wife or girlfriend to distract us, no off-the-pitch marketing campaigns. Instead, we can concentrate on the football and a wonderful goal, for Barca against Getafe, that has already entered the collective consciousness of the game.

How Messi copes with the adulation and the fame is going to be fascinating. As a player he has been compared to Diego Maradona. We can but hope that Messi is made of sterner stuff off the pitch. The next chapter in the Messi story is set to be written at the 2007 Copa America in Venezuela. We'll preview that tournament in depth next month. See you then.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
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# STARTER FOR TEN

Big questions of the moment

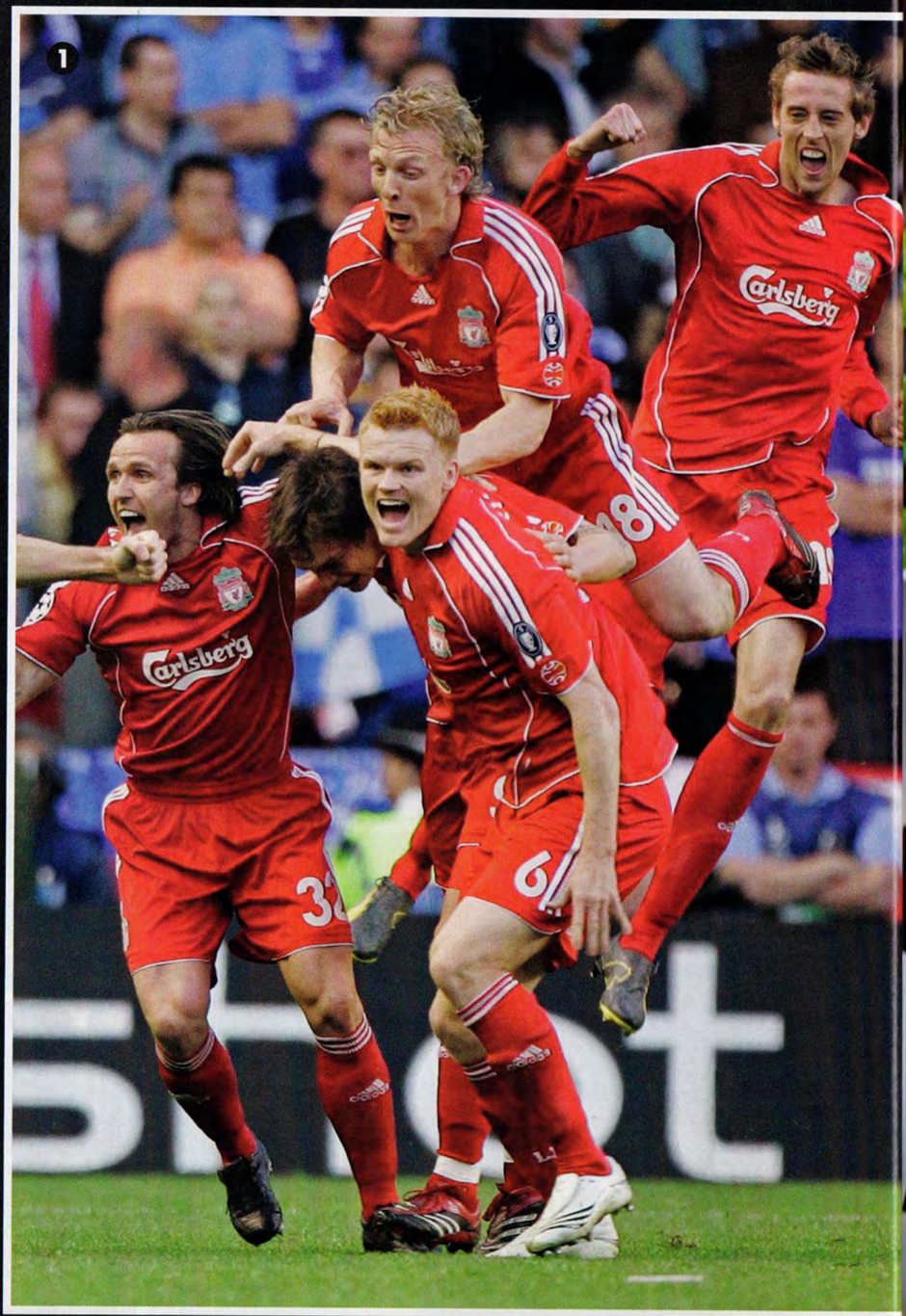
**1 IS RAFA BENITEZ THE CALMEST MAN IN FOOTBALL?**
The Liverpool manager appeared to be meditating during the penalty shoot-out as his side beat Chelsea to reach their second Champions League Final in three years.

**2 WILL LIONEL MESSI EVER SHAKE OFF THE "NEW MARADONA" TAG?**
Barcelona's wonderkid confirmed his status as football's new superstar with his wondergoal against Getafe. More, page 34.

**3 HOW STRONG WAS MICHEL PLATINI'S INFLUENCE IN UEFA'S DECISION TO AWARD EURO 2012 TO POLAND/ UKRAINE?**
Eastern European votes helped to secure the UEFA presidency for the Frenchman. Was this payback time? More, page 68.

**4 WILL OTTMAR HITZFELD REGRET ACCEPTING BAYERN MUNICH'S OFFER TO COACH THEM NEXT SEASON?**
Things were looking rosy after Bayern beat Real Madrid in the Champions League first knockout round. Then they lost to Milan in the last eight and went to pieces in the Bundesliga. More, page 28.

**5 WILL BRAZIL GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER IN TIME FOR 2014?**
Brazil are the only candidates to host the World Cup in seven years' time after Colombia withdrew their bid.



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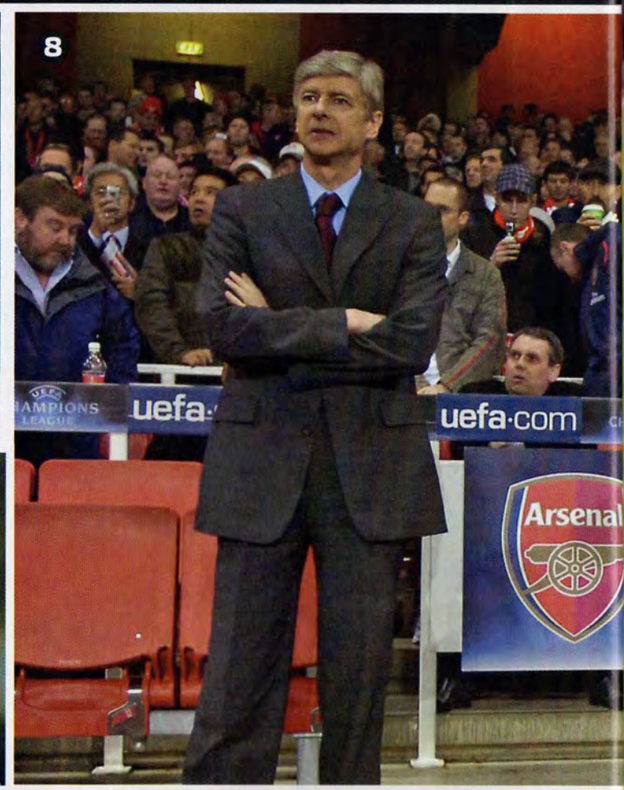


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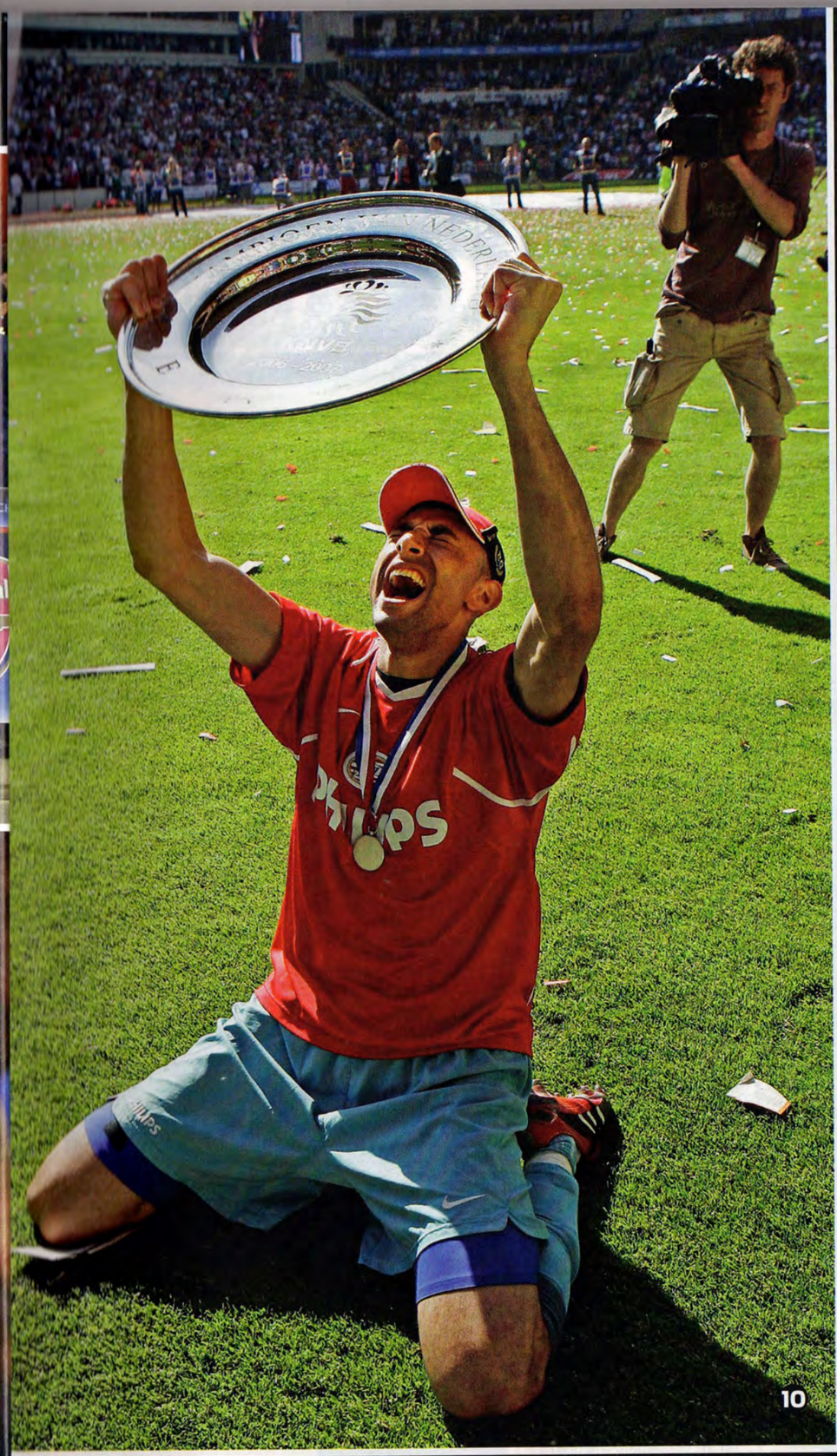

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**6 CAN THINGS GET ANY WORSE FOR ITALIAN FOOTBALL?**
With the failed bid for Euro 2012 and the re-emergence of the match-fixing scandal, calcio has never had it so bad. More, page 22.

**7 WILL DAVID BECKHAM WIN A TROPHY WITH REAL MADRID AFTER ALL?**
With Barcelona and Sevilla stalling, Madrid are still in with a shout in the league title race.

**8 WILL DAVID DEIN'S DEPARTURE FROM ARSENAL AFFECT ARSENE WENGER'S FUTURE AT THE CLUB?**
After losing his close ally, the manager faces an uncertain summer.

**9 WILL THE MANAGERS' MERRY-GO-ROUND SPARK A SUMMER TRANSFER FRENZY IN EUROPE?**
With high-profile coaches set to move on, big-name players could follow them to new clubs. More, page 44.

**10 DID THE LAST DAY OF THE DUTCH SEASON MAKE IT THE MOST EXCITING LEAGUE IN EUROPE?**
PSV clinched the title by a single goal from Ajax. More, page 86.

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# The big issue

## What Spain can learn from England

### by Juande Ramos, Sevilla coach

AS I'M currently involved in three competitions [Spanish League, Spanish Cup, UEFA Cup] with a real chance of winning all three, you need to be able to sit back and analyse the situation from a distance. The short-term approach does not work. As we say in Spain, urgency in football is an unreliable friend.

Currently, English teams have shown less urgency in complicated situations. The management have been shown to take the right decisions, based on many years' experience. Their results this season back all this up.

No one plays more matches each season than the English clubs, yet they have been involved in the latter stages of the big European competitions in recent years. Having three English sides among the four Champions League semi-finalists this season is proof of English football's strength. The English are not just the inventors of the game, they are also doing more than anyone to develop it and take it forward.

In this respect, my approach to football is very English and I don't hide the fact that at least half a dozen English clubs – each with its own characteristics – provide the mirror in which I see my own club. I won't mention any one club in particular, but I will say that the method in which I try to get my teams going is very British, with a great respect towards fair play and attack, and the emphasis on speed and trying to impose our rhythm on the opposition. You need all of that to create the right atmosphere so that your stadium becomes a fortress where rivals feel overwhelmed from the first minute.

It's no coincidence that in recent years we have witnessed so many English sides achieving excellent results in European football. There's nothing accidental about it when so much planning has taken place, with co-ordinated work between all the sections of a club. If you avoid urgency and short-termism, everything happens at the right time, including change.

I'm happy in Seville and I want to get to the end of the season and be able to say I have achieved success. During the summer break I will think about England again and its football. But I can't and don't want to forget that I'm coach of a magnificent team in the Spanish "League of the Stars".

*Do you agree or disagree with Juande Ramos? Have your say at worldsoccer.com/forums*

English approach...Juande Ramos

# FROM THE MESSAGE BOARDS

## ...on Poland/Ukraine's winning Euro bid

"A very pleasant surprise indeed! I think it's excellent that different countries should get the opportunity to host the major competitions. I also suspect the opportunities for joint bids (which are obviously necessary for a lot of smaller countries) can only increase if the European Championship does increase to 24 countries in 2016. What about Scotland, Ireland & Wales? Norway, Sweden & Denmark (+ Finland?)? Romania, Bulgaria & Serbia?"
Posted by "badgerboy", April 18

"After Poland/Ukraine's joint bid was chosen, many pundits suggested that Michel Platini paid back eastern European countries for their support in the UEFA presidential election. But according to information I found on a Polish website, the Frenchman voted for the Italian bid. Ukraine and Poland were backed by Geoffrey Thompson (England), Marius Lefkaritis (Cyprus), Angel Maria Villar Llona (Spain), Mathieu Springer (Holland), Wiaczeslaw Koloskow (Russia), Gilberto Madail (Portugal), Mircea Sandu (Romania) and Senes Erzik (Turkey); Platini, Joseph Mifsud (Malta), Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder (Germany) and Per Ravn Omdal (Norway) voted for Italy. Honestly, I didn't expect our country and Ukraine to win it. I wanted them to achieve it but I thought Italy would win. It is a big boost for our countries, not only in footballing terms."
Posted by "marcin", April 19

## ...on the Champions League semis

"I don't even think an Italian club [Milan] should be involved in the Champions League. They've been embroiled in cheating for so long. They escaped lightly."
Posted by "TheGer", April 26

"This Milan side has been termed an ageing one but they have progressed so far in the competition you ought to pay them respect and also praise them – they won at the Allianz Arena when they were on the back foot."
Posted by "subhankar mondal", April 27

Post your comments at worldsoccer.com/forums
worldsoccer.com

# WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

Face in the crowd...Carl Lewis is in place for the Boca-River derby

● Aston Martin, Maserati, Mercedes, Audi Q7, Hummer... Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o claims he has lost count of the number of vehicles he owns. He is so short of garage space at home that he has taken to leaving some at the Camp Nou car park.

● Jose Mourinho was reportedly spotted in a Porsche dealership in west London taking delivery of a left-hand drive 4x4. Perfect for the mean streets of Madrid.

● Obviously at a loose end while on an international sabbatical, Francesco Totti has created his own magazine, entitled *Number Ten*. The first issue was a huge success, with 20,000 copies sold in a few days.

● Carl Lewis, the quadruple gold medallist at the 1984 Olympics, was in attendance at the Boca Juniors-River Plate derby last month.

● Bayern Munich are working on the theory that the badly swollen left knee that caused midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger to miss the last few weeks of the season stemmed from a two-year-old flea bite. It is feared he has Lyme disease, a bacterial infection that can cause muscular and joint problems.

● Didier Drogba is set to release a rap album. The Chelsea striker goes under the alias of Drogbacite – P Didier might have been better.

● According to Spanish daily *Marca*, Ronaldinho and Lindsay Rijkaard, the daughter of Barca coach Frank, are an item. The paper implied that the relationship held the key to where Roni would play next season: at Camp Nou or Milan.

● Former Argentina coach Daniel Passarella has been sentenced to 27 months' community service for illegally importing a yacht from the United States. He will be working with kids at a Buenos Aires school.

Keel-hauled...Passarella

# ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines

APRIL

## HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with most votes make the overall team of the month.

**Daniel Alves**
(Sevilla, 4 votes)
Once again proved himself to be the best attacking full-back in the world with a quite scintillating performance in Sevilla's 4-1 league win over Athletic Bilbao.

**Jose Reina**
(Liverpool, 4 votes)
Still rated far higher in his homeland, Spain, than in the Premiership. But the gap is closing rapidly, largely because of his brilliance in the Champions League.

**Marco Materazzi**
(Internazionale, 5 votes)
Bad boy Marco has added a slither of self-control to his game. Imperious in defence for Inter and scored both goals as the team clinched the league title with a 2-1 win at Siena.

**Sergio Ramos**
(Real Madrid, 3 votes)
His grit and dynamism in central defence have done much to keep Real in the league title race. Also scored the winner, a header, in a vital game at Valencia.

**Dejan Stankovic**
(Internazionale, 3 votes)
The brains of Inter's Serie A triumph. Outstanding on the right or left of midfield, or as a "nine and a half" just behind the strikers.

**Cristiano Ronaldo**
(Manchester Utd, 8 votes)
The boy from Madeira continues to produce magic. England's newly elected Players' Player of the Year looks worth every penny of his new multi-million pound deal.

**Didier Drogba**
(Chelsea, 4 votes)
Although often left too isolated at the point of Chelsea's attack, the reigning African Footballer of the Year's standards have never slipped. A 90-minute handful.

**Kaka**
(Milan, 9 votes)
Did not deserve to be on the losing side after scoring two memorable goals in Milan's defeat at Manchester United in the Champions League semi-final first leg. Sheer class.

**Afonso Alves**
(Heerenveen, 4 votes)
The Brazilian finished top scorer in the Dutch League, taking his tally to 34 with four goals in Heerenveen's final match, a 5-1 rout of Feyenoord that secured a UEFA Cup place at least.

**Lionel Messi**
(Barcelona, 5 votes)
Scorer of *that* goalagainst Getafe in the Spanish Cup, and he was also Barcelona's best performer in the League during the past month.

**Wayne Rooney**
(Manchester Utd, 8 votes)
Back to his best. Ravenous in his appetite for hard graft and goals (two in the Champions League semi first leg, two in the FA Cup semi win against Watford and one in a vital league victory at Everton).

La Gazzetta dello Sport · World Soccer · don balon · kicker · A BOLA · Sport-Express · voetbal INTERNATIONAL · FOOT MAGAZINE · FANATIK

## HOW THEY VOTED

**A Bola (Portugal)**
Cech (Chelsea)
Bordon (Schalke)
Materazzi (Internazionale)
Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Kaka (Milan)
Diego (Werder Bremen)
Figo (Internazionale)
Messi (Barcelona)
Drogba (Chelsea)
Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)

**Don Balon (Spain)**
Reina (Liverpool)
Daniel Alves (Sevilla)
Materazzi (Internazionale)
Terry (Chelsea)
Messi (Barcelona)
Kaka (Milan)
Cocu (PSV)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Rooney (Man Utd)
Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)
Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)

**Fanatik (Turkey)**
Reina (Liverpool)
Daniel Alves (Sevilla)
Terry (Chelsea)
Puyol (Barcelona)
Lahm (Bayern Munich)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Stankovic (Internazionale)
Kaka (Milan)
Pires (Villarreal)
Rooney (Man Utd)
Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)

**Foot (Belgium)**
Van der Sar (Man Utd)
Daniel Alves (Sevilla)
Bordon (Schalke)
Riise (Liverpool)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Diego (Werder Bremen)
Stankovic (Internazionale)
Kaka (Milan)
Kanoute (Sevilla)
Rooney (Man Utd)
Ibrahimovic (Internazionale)

**Gazzetta dello Sport (Italy)**
Cech (Chelsea)
Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)
Materazzi (Internazionale)
Carragher (Liverpool)
Abidal (Lyon)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Carrick (Man Utd)
Kaka (Milan)
Cocu (PSV)
Messi (Barcelona)
Rooney (Man Utd)

**Kicker (Germany)**
Iraizoz (Espanyol)
Daniel Alves (Sevilla)
Nesta (Milan)
Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea)
Carragher (Liverpool)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Daniel Lopez (Osasuna)
Seedorf (Milan)
Giggs (Man Utd)
Rooney (Man Utd)
Kaka (Milan)

**Sport-Express (Russia)**
Cech (Chelsea)
Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)
Materazzi (Internazionale)
Nesta (Milan)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Diego (Werder Bremen)
Kaka (Milan)
Messi (Barcelona)
Giggs (Man Utd)
Rooney (Man Utd)
Drogba (Chelsea)

**Voetbal International (Holland)**
Reina (Liverpool)
Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)
Materazzi (Internazionale)
Carragher (Liverpool)
Carrick (Man Utd)
Scholes (Man Utd)
Kaka (Milan)
Seedorf (Milan)
Rooney (Man Utd)
Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)
Drogba (Chelsea)

**World Soccer (UK)**
Reina (Liverpool)
Maicon (Internazionale)
Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea)
Maxwell (Internazionale)
Messi (Barcelona)
Kaka (Milan)
Stankovic (Internazionale)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd)
Rooney (Man Utd)
Drogba (Chelsea)
Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)

# NUMBERS GAME

## Figuring out the footballing world

**8**

Coaches hired and fired by Media Sports Investments since taking over Corinthians at the end of 2004.

**59**

Goals scored by promotion-chasing Ghanaian team Nania in two games against Okwawu United and Great Marinerin, prompting a one-year ban for alleged match-fixing for Nania owner Abedi Pele.

Pay to view...United ticket prices are on the up

**12.3%**

The average increase in season ticket prices at Manchester United next season.

**£14.2m**

Value of the lawsuit filed by former Italy striker Christian Vieri against Internazionale and Telecom Italia for allegedly tapping his phone between 1999 and 2005.

Goalless...Bordeaux v Paris Saint-Germain

**6**

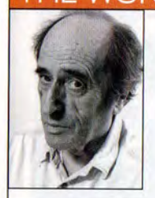
0-0 draws in the French top division on the weekend of April 14-15, making it the round with fewest goals since 1932.

**1.6m**

Euro 2008 ticket requests discarded by UEFA because it believed them to be destined for the black market.

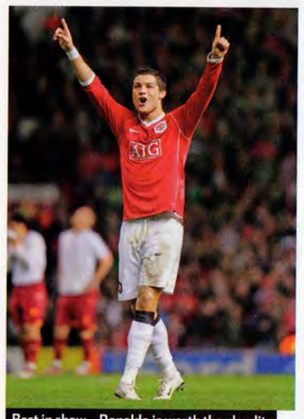
**16**

The number of sheep presented to Ivica Supe of Croatian third division side NK Zagor, one for each of his goals this season.



# Brian Glanville

## ...on Cristiano Ronaldo, natural heir to George Best... the distasteful Roman reaction to the Olimpico violence...the welcome return of Alan Smith and Joe Cole...and why five-year-olds should not be coached



Best in show...Ronaldo is worth the plaudits

MANCHESTER UNITED'S glorious 7-1 crushing of Roma at Old Trafford may be seen as a kind of proxy revenge for those of their fans who were viciously attacked by Roma thugs and subsequently by the police in the Olympic stadium.

This was arguably the finest display in Europe by United since that spring day in 1966 when they won 5-1 at Benfica, a team who had won all 18 of their previous European Cup home ties. The sparkling hero of the occasion was an irresistible George Best, who scored twice in the first dozen minutes – with a majestic header and after a superlative slalom past three defenders. Two years later, in the European Cup Final at Wembley, it would be Best, again against Benfica, who spun and accelerated through the defence at the start of extra-time to restore United's lead, at a point when it looked as if they might have lost the plot.

Cristiano Ronaldo is properly seen as Best's natural heir. Like Best he has pace, glorious control and power in the air, though he is a much bigger fellow. After the Roma game, Alex Ferguson called him the greatest player in the world, and he certainly has claims, as Ronaldinho's star seems slightly to have faded.

Happy return...Joe Cole has played with skill and drive

Pass master... Glenn Hoddle

Best was never quite that. He once, somewhat immodestly, observed: "If I'd been born ugly, you'd never have heard of Pele." Second best, maybe. No pun intended.

Meanwhile, nitwits of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your brains. William Gaillard, a UEFA executive, and an MP called John Denton, the head of one of those superfluous parliamentary committees, were at one in their fatuous insistence that what was now needed, after the atrocious events in Rome and Seville, and let us not forget what happened in Lens, was greater co-operation between police forces.

Had either of them stopped to think, the natural corollary of such daft advice was that the English police should become as violent, brutal and discriminatory as the police of Rome, Seville and Lens. Instead, Manchester's police supremely saw to it that the return match with Roma passed off with a minimum of disturbance. Nor, please note, did they attack the Roma fans during the game.

After the trouble in Rome, by sharp contrast with the local press reaction when Roman thugs violently attacked Liverpool fans after the European Cup Final of 1984 at the Olimpico, the press, the Roma club and the authorities closed ranks in blaming only the long-suffering United fans.

A disingenuous woman executive of Roma announced that their fans always behaved well; as if stabbing opposing supporters in the buttocks constituted no more than a friendly greeting. The mayor of Rome criticised Ferguson for so aptly warning his fans before the game. The Roman chief of police, Achille Sierra, exonerated his cowardly (why weren't they among the adjacent Roma fans?) and brutal men. The *Il Messaggero* newspaper, which in 1984 stood up for truth and objectivity, now blamed United fans.

What's to be done? Sad though it is to say it, an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure. Since UEFA and the local Roman authorities are plainly inclined to do nothing, the only solution, however unhappy, is to stop English fans going to games at the Olimpico in which Roma are involved. How grimly significant it is that while almost all the ultras of the major Italian clubs have pledged not to use knives, Roma's thugs have not.

THOUGH England with the hopeless Steve McClaren in charge remain a lost cause, the Champions League quarter-finals threw up two talents who could improve English prospects; two players who have returned to activity after a long travail of injury.

The absence of Louis Saha for Manchester United's second leg against Roma prompted Alex Ferguson to deploy Alan Smith in the role that suits him best, as striker, and he responded with great brio – including scoring United's second goal in the drubbing – having previously and uneasily been used in midfield, and having refused to go out on loan but rather fight for a place at United.

Since England are plainly short of a spearhead – Peter Crouch has clever feet, but no pace, Andy Johnson hasn't made the grade – Smith is surely worth another chance.

Chelsea, whose 2-1 victory in Valencia was another major achievement, had meanwhile at last recovered Joe Cole, who far from showing any sign of lacking match fitness, contrived at once to play with skill, ebullience and drive.

Another intriguing facet of United's crushing of Roma was the huge success of using Ryan Giggs in a central midfield role, while Wayne Rooney was splendidly effective on the left. I have long thought Giggs the finest player of his British generation, but have admired him and his many talents – speed, skill, flair, tactical nous – chiefly as an outside-left. But Ferguson's decision to use him more centrally was a total success, for he played a classical inside-forward's game, while Rooney, who has often looked unhappy on the left, not least with England, excelled against Roma.

I BOW TO none in my admiration of Trevor Brooking, a splendid footballer, an excellent if transitory manager of West Ham United, who, in an ideal world, could have, I am sure, succeeded as a permanent one, while notionally a vastly more effective England manager than the present sad incumbent.

Yet when he emerges to suggest that boys be coached from the age of five, I hear warning bells. Very young children should surely be left alone to learn and enjoy through play as the child psychologists tell us. And while there is no doubt, when expert youth coaches such as John Cartwright tell us so, that many a 15 or 16-year-old player has developed so many bad habits that he is irretrievable, does Brooking really feel that good youth coaches are to be found in abundance? I believe they are very few and far between.

I commend Trevor to ponder on the words of Ferenc Puskas, who opined: "I am grateful to my father for all the coaching that he did NOT give me. In Hungary, boys in their own enthusiasm learn to control a ball almost from the time they can walk."

Glenn Hoddle, a supreme ball player, once told me that he had taught himself every trick but one in his formidable repertoire in his back garden by the time he was 11.

Brazil's astonishing Garrincha delighted in playing in crowded games in his village, on a barren ground, split by a deep ditch. Only reluctantly would he be tempted into Rio by the likes of Botafogo to try out.

And, of course, there is the ever present danger of boys being obliged to play for teams under intense paternal pressure to do well. As Ted Bates, late manager and director of Southampton and no mean player himself, once told me: "They learn to win before they can play." ●

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worldsoccer.com

# QUOTES & NOTES

## Who said what and why

Grim up north...Baptista struggles in Newcastle

***"The teams from the north of England are terrible. When we play them, I have counted their centre-backs booting up to 30 long balls upfield per game."***

Arsenal's on-loan Brazilian striker Julio Baptista.

***"We were never worried about our financial commitment. We've already made our money back."***

Tim Leiweke, president of AEG, the company that owns Los Angeles Galaxy, on the multi-million dollar investment in David Beckham.

***"It's a surprise. Our problem is the state of the stadiums and training facilities, which leave a lot to be desired."***

Poland coach Leo Beenhakker reacts to the country winning Euro 2012 hosting rights.

***"I feel very much at risk. I've received over 50 calls threatening myself and my family with death."***

Spanish referee Javier Turienzo Alvarez says he has become a target for Real Madrid fans after making a number of contentious decisions in Real's 2-1 defeat at Racing Santander.

***"If he can't put up with the pressure, let him go and play at a smaller club."***

Vasco da Gama forward Leandro Amaral blames team-mate Romario for the side's poor results, arguing that the veteran's quest for 1,000 career goals is putting an excessive strain on the team.

***"Call me old-fashioned but we don't need Kroenke's money and we don't need his sort."***

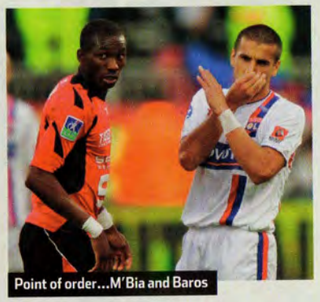
Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood pulls up the drawbridge against a possible takeover by US billionaire Stan Kroenke.

***"When English clubs were banned from Europe in the 80s, it produced results. The same punishment could work with us, too."***

AEK Athens president Demis Nikolaidis advocates radical anti-hooligan measures for Greece.

***"I was deeply hurt."***

Rennes' Cameroonian defender Stephane M'Bia reveals his feelings after claiming Lyon attacker Milan Baros racially abused him by pinching his nose and pointing at him.



Point of order...M'Bia and Baros

# MATCH ATTENDANCES

## How domestic league crowd figures compare

### 15,504
**UNITED STATES**

The average Major League Soccer crowd last year. Attendances have been steady for the past five seasons, following a fall from 17,406 in 1996, the inaugural season. Los Angeles Galaxy had the highest average attendance last term, 20,814; city rivals Chivas USA were next, on 19,840.

### 33,384
**ENGLAND**

The average Premier League attendance in 2005-06, down from the 40-year peak of 35,464 in 2002-03. Manchester United had the highest average crowd last season, 68,765, followed by Newcastle on 52,052 and Liverpool on 44,236. This season, Old Trafford's increased capacity has pushed Man Utd's crowds up to over 75,000. Arsenal have moved up to second, with an average crowd of 60,043 at their new Emirates stadium.

### 29,029
**SPAIN**

The average crowd in La Liga in 2005-06. Barcelona had the highest average attendance, 73,325, with Real Madrid next on 51,544, but both were well short of their respective stadium capacities, 97,000 and 78,000.

### 40,745
**GERMANY**

The average Bundesliga crowd in 2005-06, making it the most popular league in the world. However, attendances have dropped this season, to 38,933. Borussia Dortmund had the highest average last season, 72,627, followed by Bayern Munich (67,641) and Schalke (61,299).

### 21,576
**FRANCE**

The average Ligue 1 crowd in 2005-06. Attendances rose after the 1998 World Cup, peaking in 2000-01 at 22,613. Last season, Marseille had the highest average, 49,625, ahead of Paris Saint-Germain (40,486) and Lyon (38,465).

### 11,890
**RUSSIA**

The average attendance in the top division in 2006, making it the most popular league in eastern Europe. The next three were Ukraine (7,838), Romania (5,629; for 2005-06) and Poland (5,522; 2005-06).

### 9,423
**SWEDEN**

The average crowd for the top division in 2006. The Swedish League had the best attendances in Scandinavia last year, narrowly ahead of Norway on 9,100, with Denmark third on 7,957 (2005-06).

### 16,237
**HOLLAND**

The average crowd in the top division in 2005-06. Attendances have risen every year since 1996, when the average was 10,326. Last season, the top three clubs were Ajax (47,281), Feyenoord (39,824) and PSV (33,082).

### 10,600
**CHINA**

The average attendance in the Super League in 2006. Shandong Luneng were the best supported club, with 30,700.

### 21,698
**ITALY**

The average attendance for Serie A games in 2005-06. Crowds have fallen every season since 1999-2000 (average 29,981), with a figure to date this term of only 18,094. Milan had the highest average last season, 59,993, followed by Internazionale (51,371) and Roma (39,726).

### 18,292
**JAPAN**

The average attendance for top-division games last year. Crowds peaked in 1994, the second J.League season, at 19,598. There was a low of 10,131 in 1997, since when they have been rising steadily. Urawa Red Diamonds had the highest average crowd last season, 45,573; Albirex Niigata were next on 38,711.

# HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

## Sepp Blatter
## FIFA president set for third term

**SWITZERLAND**

SEPP BLATTER will be elected unopposed for a third term as FIFA president at congress in Zurich later this month. No other nominations had been received by the March 31 deadline, so the 71-year-old is set to remain in office for another four years at least.

When Blatter first stood for president in 1998, he said a FIFA president should serve no more than two terms. Now it appears he plans to emulate such sporting oligarchs as predecessor Joao Havelange and the IOC's Juan Antonio Samaranch by carrying on indefinitely. "I recently received a clean bill of health, so there is no reason to stop," Blatter said. "I was hindered from doing my work in my first term. And it was difficult to go into the election of 2002 after all the criticism starting in 2001, so I have lost a lot of time. Now being unopposed it means that the football family are aware that there is still something to do and they believe I can do it."

The organisation of the 2010 and 2014 World Cups (in South Africa and, provisionally, Brazil respectively) will occupy much of Blatter's time in his third term, as well as deciding the destination of the 2018 finals. He has insisted that rotation of the tournament should continue after 2014, with Asia next in line.

Blatter will also have to deal with further fall-out from the investigation by Swiss prosecutors into alleged bribes paid by ex-marketing partner ISL to FIFA executive committee members.

*Gavin Hamilton*

Staying on top...Blatter, celebrating the Indian federation's 70th anniversary on April 17

## Jose Reina
## Shoot-out heroics put Liverpool back in European finale

**ENGLAND**

Stop and go...Reina saves from Chelsea's Geremi and, right, shows his delight at the win

GOALKEEPER Jose "Pepe" Reina was the hero of Liverpool's penalty shoot-out victory over Chelsea at Anfield, which set up a repeat of the 2005 Champions League Final against Milan in Athens on May 23.

He saved two of the visitors' three spot-kicks, which followed a 1-1 aggregate draw, before Dirk Kuijt converted Liverpool's fourth out of four to put the side into their second Champions League Final in three seasons under manager Rafa Benitez.

Reina had also shown his shoot-out prowess last May when saving three West Ham penalties to help Liverpool to win the FA Cup in Cardiff.

Ironically, the Spaniard joined Liverpool in summer 2005 as a replacement for Jerzy Dudek, the hero of the shoot-out victory over Milan in Istanbul a few weeks earlier. Reina got the nod because Benitez was unhappy about the Pole's perceived lack of consistency.

Reina soon showed that consistency was one of his strong suits. In December 2005, he set a new club record for consecutive clean sheets (eight) and then managed to concede only 29 goals in his first 50 games, beating Ray Clemence's record of 32 set in 1970-71.

"We have the best goalkeeper in the world," said Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard after the semi-final victory.

"Pepe Reina was fantastic in the penalty shoot-out, he is an expert when it comes to that," Benitez added.

The night had a sour end for Reina, however. He returned to his home in the Woolton suburb of Liverpool to find it had been ransacked. Burglars had taken jewellery, an entertainment system and a grey Porsche Cayenne. The car was found burnt out a few miles away the following morning.

*John Holmesdale*

Inter strip...Ibrahimovic celebrates the championship victory

# Zlatan Ibrahimovic
## At the heart of Inter's title win

**ITALY**

AMONG THE MANY tattoos that adorn the body of Internazionale star Zlatan Ibrahimovic, he has a special one, written across his left ribs. On those occasions when he pulls up his shirt after scoring, it can easily be seen; "Only God can judge me," it says.

But the 25-year-old Swedish forward has been much judged by pundits throughout his so-far brilliant career. His obvious self-belief, exuberant personality, tendency to indulge in "fancy tricks" on the pitch and willingness to argue with team-mates and journalists have all earned him, rightly or wrongly, the reputation of being a "hothead". At the very least, those who know him suggest he is not always a good listener.

"I play the way I am, and I am the way my bloodline is," Ibrahimovic says. "My mother, Djulka, worked as a cleaning lady, long and hard, as only someone with a strong personality could work. My father, Sefik, works as the handyman for a business and he has a boundless pride – you can never help him in anything, he won't let you. Maybe that's why, even when I was a child, people were always saying to me: 'You never listen.' "

On the day Inter won this season's Serie A title, with a 2-1 defeat of Siena, everybody was listening to him. Ibrahimovic, widely considered to be one of the key figures in the club's triumph, struck a typically immodest note when saying: "Wherever I go, I win. This is my fifth title – two in Holland [with Ajax] and three in Italy [the other two were with Juventus]. I don't like losing and I am only pleased if I win. They haven't won the title here at Inter for many, many years, whereas it was normal for Ajax and Juventus. However, wherever you win, it's still great."

Not everyone has always been impressed by him, however. At 6ft 4in and powerfully built, he can sometimes look awkward. During last year's World Cup, the now Aston Villa manager Martin O'Neill told British TV viewers that Ibrahimovic was "possibly the most over-rated player in the world". Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho compared his performance in Sweden's 2-0 second round defeat by Germany to "watching a donkey getting whipped on a beach in Portugal".

### Disciplinary problems

More recently, Ibrahimovic has had his disciplinary troubles with Sweden coach Lars Lagerback, resulting in a spell in the international wilderness. The pair have since made up, and those who have seen Ibrahimovic in Italy can understand why the coach was keen to have him back in the squad. Fifteen league goals have been a big contribution, but he has done more than just score.

On the day after the title was secured, *La Repubblica* commented: "Inter's great season started on the day they pulled Ibrahimovic from under the noses of Milan [from Juventus, last summer]. He turned out to be the first interpreter of the type of football that [coach Roberto] Mancini wanted. He was the goalscorer, the player of those stupendous touches, of a game based on spectacle, battle and unpredictability. We knew he was a class player, but the new thing is his consistency and self-control."

*Paddy Agnew*

# Shunsuke Nakamura
## Award caps fine season for Japanese midfielder

**SCOTLAND**

The best...Nakamura

CELTIC'S Shunsuke Nakamura, whose stunning injury-time free-kick against Kilmarnock on April 22 clinched the league crown, has been voted Scotland's player of the season by his peers to cap a fine campaign.

The Japanese midfielder has vowed to stay with the back-to-back champions, saying: "I'll definitely be at Celtic Park next season, hopefully to lift my third championship in a row."

The goal against Kilmarnock was his ninth of the league campaign and, along with his two set-piece strikes against Manchester United in the Champions League, confirmed his reputation as a world-class free-kick expert.

Lead role...Ball in the Final

# Alan Ball
## Tributes flood in for the 1966 World Cup winner

**ENGLAND**

TRIBUTES FLOODED in after the sudden death of Alan Ball, the youngest member of England's 1966 World Cup-winning side, from a heart attack at the age of 61.

Sir Bobby Charlton, who was Ball's midfield partner in the tournament, said: "He was probably the best player that day [of the Final against West Germany] and if it had not been for his impact the result could have been totally different. Alan was always bright and bubbly in everything he did as a player. He went about his work with great enthusiasm and gusto."

Alan Mullery, a member of the 1970 World Cup squad in Mexico alongside Ball, said: "His nickname was 'Bouncy', he was just such a lively man."

Lawrie McMenemy, Ball's manager at Southampton, said: "In his early career he was a runner, a scrapper, a fighter, a workmanlike player. At the end of his career he became the best one-touch footballer in the game. Alan started life as a road sweeper and ended up as the best lead violinist Southampton ever had."

Ball, who won 72 caps for England, began his club career at Blackpool, moving on to Everton (with whom he won the league championship in 1970), Arsenal and Southampton. He had varying degrees of success during a management career that took him to Portsmouth, Colchester, Stoke, Exeter, Southampton and Manchester City.

**MOVERS & SHAKERS**

**News of the politicians and power-brokers**

Key influence...Ukraine president Viktor Yushchenko (right) helped swing the 2012 vote

# Viktor at the helm

● **VIKTOR YUSHCHENKO**, Ukraine's state president, will head his country's 24-person organising committee for the Euro 2012 finals, to be held jointly with Poland.

Yushchenko's presence in Cardiff for the UEFA executive vote was a crucial factor in winning the hosting rights, at the expense of Italy and Croatia/Hungary.

Ukraine's organising committee will also include federation president Hryhorii Surkis, national team coach Oleh Blokhin and captain Andrii Shevchenko, boxer Vitali Klitschko and former pole vaulter Serhii Bubka, who now heads Ukraine's Olympic committee.

● **ORLANDO SILVA DE JESUS JUNIOR**, Brazil's sports minister, is confident that the country will receive FIFA's backing to host the 2014 World Cup after Colombia, the only other candidate, withdrew its bid. "We will show FIFA's executive committee that Brazil has the capacity to be the host," he said.

The country has until the end of July to complete its bid. FIFA will then visit Brazil in September to carry out an inspection. A final decision is set to be made in November.

● **MICHEL ZEN-RUFFINEN**, the former general secretary of FIFA, is back in football as chairman of the Association of Football Agents after five years as a sports lawyer.

Zen-Ruffinen, who left FIFA in 2002 after being involved in an unsuccessful bid to topple president Sepp Blatter, was responsible for drawing up the world body's regulations regarding agents.

Back in football...Zen-Ruffinen

Top scorer...Alves

# Afonso Alves
## Unheralded striker in line for ESM Golden Shoe

**HOLLAND**

"I'm in the best form of my career," claims Heerenveen's Brazilian striker Afonso Alves, and who would argue? With 34 league goals this season, he is not only Holland's top scorer but also in line to beat such renowned forwards as Didier Drogba and Francesco Totti to the ESM Golden Shoe.

Heerenveen, specialists in scouring the Scandinavian market for talent, have certainly derived maximum value from the £3million they paid Malmo for Alves last summer. The Brazilian, formerly with Atletico Mineiro, hit a last-minute winner on his debut for the Frisians against Den Haag and has been scoring prolifically ever since, his pace, good movement, composed finishing and deadly free-kicks proving too hot for most defences to handle. It's amazing to think that he has been criticised in the past for not having enough technical ability. In Holland, his touch has rarely deserted him.

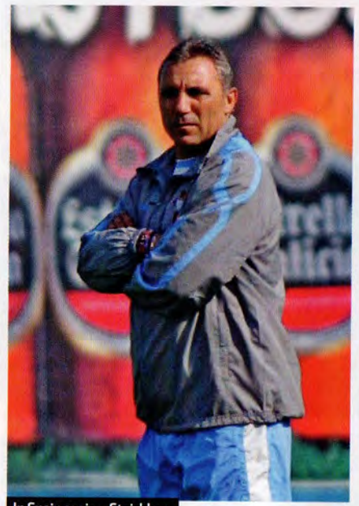
Few would have predicted Alves' remarkable season. He had a decent tally of 52 goals in four and a half years in Sweden (he also played for, and won the league title, with Orgryte of Gothenburg) but there was never anything like this term's deluge.

"My transfer to Holland has worked out perfectly," says the 26-year-old. But he could well be on the move again soon. Although Alves is only one season into a five-year deal, Heerenveen could decide to cash in now, to potentially make five times what they paid for him. "I'd love to play in Italy or Spain, where the language is easier for me to understand and where the winters are not so severe," Alves declares.

*Nick Bidwell*

# Hristo Stoichkov
## Bulgarian is surprise choice for Celta

**SPAIN**


In Spain again...Stoichkov

The name of Hristo Stoichkov still carries weight in Spain since he was a member of Johan Cruyff's Barcelona "Dream Team" of the 1990s. But few expected the Bulgarian to be named coach of struggling Celta Vigo after they sacked Fernando Vazquez.

Stoichkov quit as boss of his national team to take up the position, saying: "I am still a young coach and I felt I could waste a lot of time as national team coach when I could be learning things that would help me improve.

"I spoke to people close to me and decided it was better for me to be closer to Spanish football and to the players, with training every day, so that I could improve."

The 41-year-old faces a hard task in turning around Celta's fortunes. The club were in the drop zone on goal difference at the end of April with six games remaining.

# Fabien Barthez
## Nantes tearing hair out over "Divine Baldie"

**FRANCE**

The great Fabien Barthez rescue operation has backfired badly on Nantes. The former French champions persuaded the keeper to emerge from retirement in mid-season when they were fighting relegation. But at the end of April, instead of pushing up the table, they were flat bottom and apparently heading for the second division.

After the defeat to Italy in last summer's World Cup Final, Barthez insisted he wanted to postpone his rumoured retirement, but Marseille said they did not want to keep him on and his original club, Toulouse, also rejected his services. So the "Divine Baldie" quit the game in a huff.

Within six weeks Nantes came calling, but the union has proved a disaster. As well as failing to inspire progress on the pitch, Barthez has proved troublesome off it. Several team-mates no longer speak to him, and his attempt to bring his nutritionist into the club upset the medical staff.

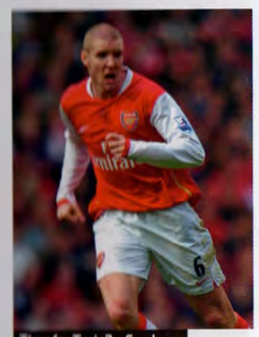
Net loss...Barthez

**RUMOURS** Snoops and scoops from the global sports press

# Senderos wanted by Juventus

ARSENAL centre-back PHILIPPE SENDEROS could be leaving for Juventus in the summer, according to Italian daily *Tuttosport*. Juve officials are said to have spent two days negotiating in north London and are prepared to offer up to £7million for the Swiss international.

Meanwhile, the Old Lady may also need to look for a new keeper. *Gazzetta dello Sport* insists GIANLUIGI BUFFON is not willing to go another year without Champions League football and is sizing up a move to Internazionale, with Milan as Plan B.


Time for Turin?...Senderos

Germany's *Sport Bild* has Werder Bremen midfield dynamo TORSTEN FRINGS sorely tempted by a transfer to Juventus. No wonder. His annual salary would rocket from £1.6million to £4.6m. Should he depart, Werder are said to be lining up Eintracht Frankfurt's JERMAINE JONES.

DAVID TREZEGUET told *Gazzetta dello Sport* recently that he hoped to sign a new deal with Juve, until 2010. But that has not quelled rumours in Spain that he will quit for Sevilla, with the latter's in-form striker FREDERIC KANOUTE going in the opposite direction.

*France Football* is predicting DJIBRIL CISSE will return to the Premiership. The striker, on loan at Marseille from Liverpool, has been criticised by fans at the Velodrome and is apparently keen to return to Anfield, where he is under contract until 2009. One snag: Cisse does not get on with Rafa Benitez, who often used to play him out of position. The smart money is on Liverpool offloading Cisse to Manchester City, Tottenham or Newcastle.

*France Football* is also tipping Liverpool to sign Lille midfielder MATHIEU BODMER.

The magazine quotes GREGORY COUPET as being interested in a move to England. France's No 1 keeper had been hoping to stay at Lyon until 2010, but was irked when president Jean-Michel Aulas said he would only be kept on if he made it clear he would not retire from the national team before the next World Cup.

> "David Trezeguet told *Gazzetta dello Sport* that he hoped to sign a new deal with Juventus, but rumours in Spain say he will quit for Sevilla"

England expects...Cisse

**GOOD MONTH FOR...**

On the rise...Keane

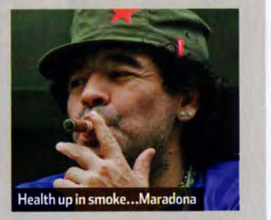
**Roy Keane**
Sunderland's manager celebrated promotion to the Premier League in his first season in charge.

**Gretna**
The former English non-league club celebrated promotion to the Scottish Premier League just five years after being elected to the Scottish League.

**BAD MONTH FOR...**

**Diego Maradona**
The great man was back in hospital with a liver condition caused by excessive drinking and smoking.

**Cleberson**
The Cabofriense defender was booked for kissing the referee after having a foul awarded against him during a defeat to Botafogo. "I didn't know it was against the rules," he said.


Health up in smoke...Maradona

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That's more like it...this year's Serie A title, clinched at Siena, clearly means so much more than last year's to Inter

# Crown, prosecution

## As Inter finally won Serie A on the pitch, new charges were filed in the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

WATCHING THE chaotic scenes of wild jubilation that greeted Internazionale's clinching of the Serie A title on April 22, you might have imagined that the club had never won it before. In fact, Inter were the reigning champions and this was their 15th title success.

Of course, they had not won a championship on the field since 1989. They were "reigning champions" this season only thanks to Calciopoli, the corruption and match-fixing scandal of last summer. Inter had finished third in Serie A in 2005-06 but were awarded the title after Juventus were stripped of it as they dropped into Serie B and second-placed Milan were docked points for their part in the affair.

For Inter fans, that championship "win" was not the real thing. The real satisfaction would come only with victory out there, on the pitch. Which is exactly what their team managed during a season of extraordinary dominance.

The 2-1 win at Siena that secured the title came with five games still to play. Only Torino in the 1948-49 season and Fiorentina in 1955-56 had won the title so comfortably. In front since late October, Inter never really gave their rivals any chance, running up a record run of 17 consecutive wins and losing only once. (That defeat had come four days before the Siena game when a clearly nervous Inter were somewhat unluckily beaten 3-1 at San Siro by closest challengers Roma.)

Inter's already strong squad was further strengthened last summer with the purchase of Brazilians Maicon (Monaco) and Maxwell (Ajax) and, arguably even more importantly, Swede Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Frenchman Patrick Vieira, both from the "fire sale" that followed Juventus' demotion. A 3-2 win at Fiorentina on the opening day and a 1-0 win at Roma in the third round suggested Inter might well be capable of living up to their favourites tag.

Yet it was only with their 4-3 derby win over Milan on October 28 that it became clear Roberto Mancini's side would take some stopping. That victory suggested this was a different Inter – less fragile mentally, more determined and sharper in front of goal than in previous seasons.

In a sense, it was fitting that the two goals against Siena were scored by Marco Materazzi. The central defender, one of the few Italian players in a squad dominated by South Americans, symbolises the Inter revival – a year ago, he was so little used and so dissatisfied that he was about to sign for Milan. He then travelled to the World Cup in the role of reserve for Alessandro Nesta, but got his chance in the team, including the Final victory and the infamous Zinedine Zidane incident, after the Milan defender suffered an injury. Now a player known around the world, for good or bad, Materazzi is no longer a reserve at Inter. Instead, it was Argentinian centre-back Walter Samuel who was on the bench for much of this season.

Of course, a question mark hangs over the campaign. Have Inter merely dominated a sub-standard Serie A, where there was no Juventus and in which major rivals played with points handicaps – Fiorentina (15), Milan (eight) and Lazio (three)? Also, Calciopoli adversely affected the morale of those clubs, giving Inter an obvious advantage. One need only look at the poor start made by Milan, although other factors played a part in that, such as having to kick off their Champions League campaign earlier than expected, in the third qualifying round, and the fact that stars Andrea Pirlo and Kaka needed extra recuperation time after their World Cup exertions.

Nonetheless, the title belongs to Inter. In the circumstances, it was hardly surprising that club owner Massimo Moratti struck a polemical note. He said: "This is the second title we have won without robbing anything from anyone. We got last year's title because others robbed. Two years ago, I told you all that I was tired of spending a lot and still losing. Then we all found out that Inter had lost because it was all fixed; it was all fixed so that others would win. After 10 terrible years, the playing field is finally level."

### Investigation

If Inter's title win was entirely predictable, so too, sadly, was the return of Calciopoli. It hit the front pages again in early April when the Naples-based state judicial investigation was formally closed with no fewer than 48 people being charged with criminal association in relation to "sports fraud".

It was inevitable that the scandal would re-emerge because state justice moves much more slowly than sports justice. When the Calciopoli affair originally came to light last year, the football federation had to come up with snappy judgements in order to decide which teams were qualified for this season's Champions League (Milan were in the end) and which were due for Serie B (Juventus). The state judiciary marches to a different beat: it was almost a year between the story first breaking and the day when Naples investigators Filippo Beatrice and Giuseppe Narducci filed their charges.

The charges draw attention to a top-of-the-table clash, a 0-0 draw, between Juventus and Milan in Turin on December 18, 2004. Juventus had gone into the game four points clear of their rivals, and it was all too obvious that a Milan win would throw the championship contest wide open, while a draw or Juve win would be a major step towards the title for the Old Lady.

The investigators accused former Juventus director Luciano Moggi (suspended from all football activities for five years after last summer's court hearings) and a colleague, Mariano Fabiani (a former director of Messina), of having put undue pressure on referee Paolo Bertini. They said that in the 24 hours before the match, there had been no fewer than 42 phone calls involving the trio, calls made on mobiles using Swiss

> "I was tired of spending a lot and still losing, then we found out why we lost – it was all fixed"
>
> *Inter owner Massimo Moratti*

Bloody mess...a Manchester United fans suffers in Rome

> "The Italian season has been beset by negative images"

Sim cards that could not be traced by Italian police. The investigators concluded: "Moggi and Fabiani were the instigators and they performed fraudulent acts designed to influence the final result...a finality that was carried out by Bertini, who operated so that he might achieve a result favourable to Moggi's team."

Two controversial incidents stand out from that game. Firstly, in only the fourth minute, Bertini ignored what looked like a blatant penalty when Juve defender Jonathan Zebina pulled Milan striker Hernan Crespo to the ground. Secondly, midway through the second half, the referee opted to stop play to award Milan a free-kick instead of playing advantage and allowing Kaka to continue his run on goal with only keeper Gigi Buffon to beat. Milan owner Silvio Berlusconi welcomed the judicial developments, saying: "I have always thought and I've repeated it several times in the past few months that Milan was a victim."

As far as Italian football was concerned, Calciopoli could hardly have picked a worse moment to raise its ugly head again. The Italian season has been beset by negative images – from the Catania riot that cost the life of police inspector Filippo Raciti to the Italian police (perhaps unnecessarily) wading into Manchester United fans during a Champions League tie against Roma at the Stadio Olimpico.

**Serious put-down**

When UEFA's executive sprang a major surprise by awarding Euro 2012 to Ukraine and Poland (see Comment, page 68), it was tempting to conclude that the composite image of corruption and violence had cost Italian football dearly. In all probability, the change in UEFA's political outlook, wrought by new president Michel Platini, played an even bigger role than Italy's domestic troubles. But there was no doubt that the UEFA decision represented a serious put-down for calcio and for the reigning world champions.

With Calciopoli still to run its full judicial course and with no Euro 2012 to prepare for, Italian football is due for a long, hot summer. In particular, newly elected federation president Giancarlo Abete and sports minister Giovanna Melandri will have to find ways to ensure that the nationwide programme of stadium renovation and rebuilding, considered by many an indispensable step in the fight against violence, goes ahead, even without the carrot of 2012. The road in front of them looks long and winding. ●

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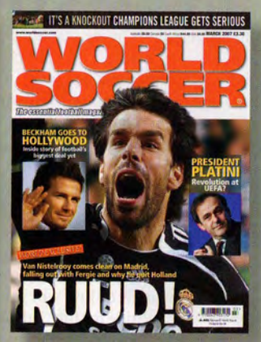

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# Second best?

## As English clubs dominated the Champions League semi-finals, the Spanish took heart from the success of their teams in the UEFA Cup

SPANISH CLUBS' RESULTS in this season's Champions League were a blow, but the country has taken succour from the fact that three of its sides reached the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup – a more reliable guide, the Spanish not unreasonably insisted, of a national league's strength in depth.

There was comfort, too, in Spain's recent Champions League record, upheld not only by the traditional powers of Real Madrid and Barcelona but also Valencia, Deportivo La Coruna and Villarreal. The Spanish feel this season's relatively poor showing – with Barca and Madrid both exiting in the first knockout round and Valencia dropping out in the quarter-finals – was a blip not a downward trend.

In 1999-2000, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia all reached the semi-finals, while Spain has had two representatives in the last four on three occasions this decade: Valencia and Real Madrid in 2000-01, Barcelona and Real Madrid in 2001-02, and Barcelona and Villarreal last season. A Spanish team has appeared in four of the last seven Finals.

Nevertheless, the lack of a Spanish representative in the last four this time round was undoubtedly a setback. "The truth," wrote one columnist, "is that it's a bit depressing to see the semi-finals without any Spanish teams and a bit scary to see English clubs getting the upper hand."

Yet while the presence of three Premiership teams brought sabre-rattling and tub-thumping from England, in Spain it provoked calm, intelligent reflection. It prompted serious analysis of England, whose football is widely respected in Spain, at least at an emotional level, if not a technical one.

"What's happening is no coincidence," insisted former Real Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque. "I have to say that I am very pleased to see English teams doing so well. The English League has improved enormously in recent years and they play really attractive football. I don't think there's a team in Europe that plays more spectacular football than Manchester United, while there isn't a better team defensively than Chelsea."

**Improvement**

Others agreed that the English League has come a long way. "Less than 10 years ago, English players would eat sausages and beans on the morning of a match and drink beer on the coach on the way home," said Middlesbrough's Basque midfielder Gaizka Mendieta. "But the arrival of foreign coaches like Wenger and Houllier has changed that."

Ex-Wigan midfielder Roberto Martinez said: "The English have improved tactically. They have learned how to draw. They used to go all out for victory, come what may; now they know how to manage games better. They've even discovered a world beyond 4-4-2."

Former Barcelona and Chelsea defender Albert Ferrer claimed: "English football has become European. They have maintained the same spirit as ever, but they have changed their working philosophy."

Above all, Spanish players who have worked in England have found what they invariably describe as a level of respect towards the game and the players that does not exist in Spain – where football is more political, where the notorious *entorno* (the entourage) of which Johan Cruyff famously moaned is so important. The fact that David Beckham has had seven coaches in four years at Real Madrid compared to just one in 11 in the first team at Manchester United has not gone unnoticed.

Liverpool's Xabi Alonso speaks fondly of the tranquillity with which footballers and their coaches

SID LOWE in Madrid

Economic clout...Andrii Shevchenko scores for Chelsea in their win in Valencia

work in England; Atletico Madrid's Fernando Torres admits it is the calm professionalism of the daily routine and the passion of the fans that his countrymen most talk up when they tell him about England; and ex-Real Madrid stalwart Fernando Hierro insists: "Organisationally, the English are the best and they respect the game more than anyone else. Everything they do is geared towards improving, and that has its effect."

Ferrer adds: "The biggest difference is that they have patience. Wenger reached the [Champions League] Final last year after many years trying but failing to get there. This season, Arsenal have been knocked out early, and what's happened? Nothing. He'll be allowed to carry on working in peace. Just as no one demanded results from Rafa Benitez in his first season [at Liverpool]; all they asked was for him to lay down a philosophy, a model, a system."

Some Spaniards have talked of the need for English-style, low-key club presidents in La Liga; some have even appealed for coaches to be made managers along English lines. Others have focused on the enormous economic power of English football, the top four in particular.

For Jorge Valdano, formerly Real Madrid's sporting director, England's semi-finalists all have different approaches – from Chelsea's physique to United's technique and Liverpool's tactics – but all coincided on one thing: an absolute conviction in what they do, in what Valdano described as "the nobility, generosity and professionalism of the English player – values that rub off on the foreign players who have arrived there".

**Investment**

Yet if there are lessons to be learned, attitudes to be copied, and a fear that the economic power of England's big four will continue to eclipse the Spanish, there is also a feeling that Spain should not panic. Some argue that it is not that Spanish football as a whole has performed badly, it is that Barcelona and Real Madrid have: two teams going through bad times, not an entire league on the slide.

"I don't think the English are wiping us from the map; they have just caught us on the hop," says Alfredo Relano, the editor of sports daily *AS*. "The real failure is that Madrid and Barca have not gone further. Barca are falling into the same egotistical trap that Madrid's galacticos did. Madrid, for their part, are still in a process of reconstruction. And even then they only got knocked out on away goals."

This overlooks the fact that English teams have taken six of the 12 semi-finals places over the past three seasons, compared with Spain's two. Also, Barca and Madrid, those two struggling teams in Relano's eyes, are first and third in La Liga respectively, putting a question mark against the assumption that the Spanish League is the world's best.

But still, there was comfort beyond Spain's traditional behemoths. After all, injury-hit Valencia only missed out on this season's semis by losing narrowly to Chelsea – an economic Goliath to Valencia's David – and in the last minute, too.

And after a day of mournfulness came the smiles. The UEFA Cup became the "Spanish cup" in the words of *Marca*, while *El Mundo Deportivo's* headline shouted: "Full house!" as Sevilla, Osasuna and Espanyol reached the semi-finals, with victories over Tottenham, Bayer Leverkusen and Benfica respectively. "Spanish power in Navarra, Lisbon and London!" roared another paper.

Sevilla are second in La Liga, challenging for the title, Espanyol are a mid-table side and Osasuna could yet be dragged into the relegation fight. Yet they had proved they could match some of Europe's biggest clubs. "Maybe," wrote one delighted columnist, "Spanish football is not so bad after all!" ●

> **"I don't think the English are wiping us from the map; they have just caught us on the hop"**
>
> *AS editor Alfredo Relano*

Local affair...Alexander Kerzhakov of Sevilla has his shot on goal blocked by Savo Milosevic of Osasuna during the UEFA Cup semi-final first leg

# Bayern burn-out

## For the first time in a decade, the Bavarians are in danger of missing out on the Champions League

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

LOKOMOTIV SOFIA not Liverpool, Mattersburg rather than Milan? Bayern Munich are in real danger of failing to qualify for the Champions League for the first time in a decade – and they will find no consolation in the prospect of competing in the UEFA Cup, a competition they have haughtily dismissed as one for losers.

But also-rans are exactly what Bayern are at the moment. The Bavarians, domestic Double winners for the past two seasons, trailed leaders Schalke by nine points with four games remaining. They had suffered nine defeats in their first 30 games, and their goal tally of 45 looked distinctly modest against the 67 of second-placed Werder Bremen.

As Munich sweltered in a springtime heatwave, the city's premier club were in meltdown. Despite their prestige, big-name players and a budget other German clubs can only dream of, the Bayern wagon had spectacularly come off the rails, the team showing a lack of inspiration in their attacking play, shoddiness at the back and little cohesiveness.

Bayern's problems were perfectly illustrated during their 2-0 loss at Stuttgart, a result that left the Bavarians five points adrift of their opponents in the third and final Champions League slot. Everyone had expected Bayern to be fired up for such a crucial game. Instead, we had a masterclass in incompetence and disinterest, the visitors operating an "after you" policy in all areas of the field.

No wonder coach Ottmar Hitzfeld spent much of the 90 minutes sheepishly rubbing his eyes in disbelief. Bayern had at least gone down fighting 10 days before when losing at home to a technically superior Milan in the Champions League quarter-finals. After the Stuttgart debacle, Hitzfeld moaned: "We barely got into the game and failed to show the necessary aggression. You'll never win a game without desire and passion. You have to fight for every inch of ground. We didn't look like winners and that's a huge disappointment. Sometimes you need a heavy fall before you really understand where the problems lie and where you have to improve. If we'd made the Champions League semis, we'd only have been papering over the cracks."

### Complete restructuring

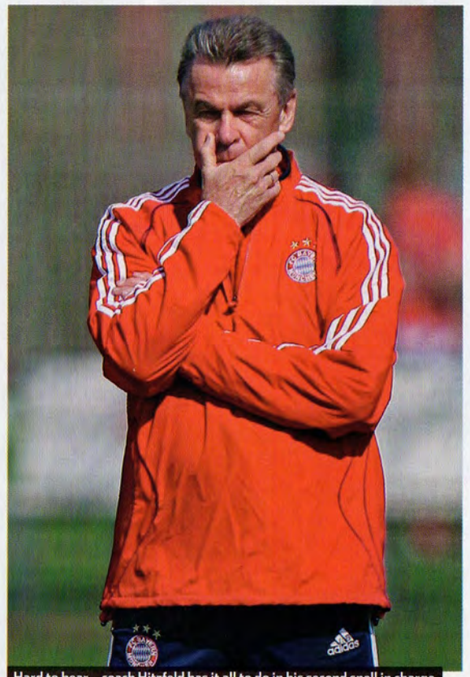
Inevitably, the Stuttgart defeat sparked much sound and fury within the Bayern camp. This is not a club that does calm, measured post-mortems, and the home truths were delivered slap bang in the public domain. President Franz Beckenbauer got the ball rolling, saying that a "complete restructuring of the squad" was on the cards.

Not surprisingly, captain and keeper Oliver Kahn also dived headlong into the fray. His beef was with the management, who according to him had culpably ignored the gap in midfield left by Michael Ballack's departure to Chelsea last summer. "To say that Bayern would play better football and be more unpredictable in attack was nonsense," Kahn stormed, alluding to past comments from chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge and Hitzfeld's predecessor, Felix Magath.

Hitzfeld will surely be wondering whether he was wise to sign up with Bayern. Brought back for a second spell in charge in January, the veteran coach was originally appointed on a caretaker basis until the end of the season, his brief being to steady the ship after Magath was unseated. But with his stock boosted by Bayern's improved league form and victory over Real Madrid in the Champions League first knockout round, "The General" was swiftly persuaded to stay on for a further year, until June 2008.

"If I'd been asked to sign a one-and-a-half-year contract in January I would have refused," Hitzfeld said on agreeing to the extension. "My return was a sort of experiment. However, things have gone well these past few weeks. I was astounded how quickly I settled into my role and how much pleasure it gave me."

But is he as enthusiastic now? Rebuilding a competitive Bayern and having only a year to do it is a lot to ask, even for a boss with such a fine track record as Hitzfeld. ●



Hard to bear...coach Hitzfeld has it all to do in his second spell in charge

> "Sometimes you need a heavy fall before you really see where the problems lie. Beating Milan and reaching the semis would have only papered over the cracks"
>
> *Ottmar Hitzfeld*

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Up in arms...Bayern keeper and skipper Oliver Kahn has rounded on the club's management and cited the failure to replace Michael Ballack as one of the key reasons for their disappointing season

# No six appeal

## Lyon won a record sixth straight league title but the team's lacklustre displays in the spring spoilt the party

HOWARD JOHNSON in Paris

AS LYON'S PLAYERS trooped off to the far end of Auxerre's Abbe-Deschamps stadium to hail their record-breaking sixth consecutive league title in front of their fans, there was more than a touch of the anti-climactic in their body language.

Club president Jean-Michel Aulas said this may well have been his club's best season "because we've delivered a more than satisfactory campaign in a season that came directly after a World Cup", but you won't find many French football fans who share his point of view.

Lyon took the title with more of a whimper than a bang. The tepid 0-0 draw at Auxerre, the day after Toulouse's defeat at Rennes confirmed the title was going to Lyon, perfectly summed up the champions' spring campaign. Yes, they won the title with six games to spare, but they had registered just five wins in 14 league games since the turn of the year.

The sparkling, adventurous, all-conquering Lyon that didn't lose a competitive game until November 4 are a distant memory. And even though the club have kept their hands on the league trophy, they are in their period of greatest uncertainty since their run of titles began in 2002. Key players look likely to leave, and, despite assurances from Aulas, the rumours about coach Gerard Houllier moving on have continued to circle.

Lyon really started to stumble at the start of March when they were outplayed at home by Roma in the Champions League first knockout round to exit the competition. For a club that had serious ambitions of winning the trophy, failing to make the quarter-finals – the stage they had reached in the previous three seasons – was a bitter pill to swallow. Even worse, the defeat seemed to disorientate the club and knock the stuffing out of the team.

Directly after the game and clearly very emotional, talismanic midfielder Juninho Pernambucano went in front of the cameras to say he thought he'd now never win the Champions League with Lyon. This immediately set tongues wagging about whether the Brazilian was going to look for a way out of the club. Juninho quickly clarified his position, saying he felt he had three good seasons left in him and would discuss his situation with Aulas at the end of the campaign. His contract expires in 2008 and given the way Lyon's season has unfolded, nothing is certain and everything is up for grabs.

The team also lost 1-0 to Bordeaux in the League Cup Final, a wretched game, on March 31. In April, they scored just one goal in a run of four league games.

Czech striker Milan Baros has not lit any fires since arriving from Aston Villa in January, and the entire team seem lacklustre and flaccid. There have even been public spats, unheard of at a club where solidarity in front of the media was an absolute given. French international Alou Diarra, bought from Lens last summer to replace Real Madrid-bound Mahamadou Diarra, hardly featured all season and went public with a rant against the club after refusing to turn out for the reserves. Houllier came down hard on the midfielder, and Diarra seems to be finished with the champions. There's also talk that Brazilian striker Fred may no longer be flavour of the month, more due to his behaviour than his performances.

Former captain Claudio Cacapa has been told his contract won't be renewed, and a number of others could be packing their bags – left-back Eric Abidal and midfielder Florent Malouda look set to ship out as Aulas implements his stated strategy of cashing in on one or two of his star players each season. Attackers Sidney Govou and Sylvain Wiltord could be on their way, too, while the future of international keeper Gregory Coupet is also far from assured with just one year remaining on his contract. "I want my children to learn English, so let's just say I'm not averse to the Premiership," he has said.

### Opportunity to reinforce

A team overhaul seems inevitable, but it's hard to say how much this might actually perturb Aulas and Houllier. Lyon, whose budget for next season will reportedly rise from £82million to £137m, could well have more transfer market muscle than ever before, giving them the opportunity to reinforce what will still be a talented group. Names in the frame at Gerland include David Trezeguet, Franck Ribery, Auxerre's young defender Younes Kaboul and Lille's combative Cameroonian midfielder Jean Makoun.

That's as maybe. But as Houllier got shirty with the pitchside reporter at Auxerre who dared to ask him about his future at the club, then stomped off down the tunnel without answering, there was little doubt that whatever Aulas might say – and despite that sixth straight title – 2006-07 won't go down as a vintage campaign for Lyon. ●

> "There have been public spats, unheard of at a club where solidarity in front of the media was an absolute given"

Exit strategy...Juninho could be on his way out

Pat on head for Fred...Gerard Houllier thanks his Brazilian striker as Lyon celebrate another title triumph. However, it's not all rosy for the club

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# From winker to winner

## The recognition of Cristiano Ronaldo as this season's best player is an important milestone for English football

RAPHAEL HONIGSTEIN in London

PLAYERS CAST THEIR votes for the PFA awards at the end of January, so they had to go on performances in the first half of the season and trust that more of the same would follow. In the case of Cristiano Ronaldo, who won both Player of the Year and Young Player accolades, their expectations were met, and then some.

The 22-year-old finally started fulfilling his enormous potential in the spring. Manchester United's 7-1 demolition of Roma in the Champions League quarter-finals marked a breakthrough: Ronaldo scored his first two goals in the competition and left Irish pundit Eamonn Dunphy, who had dismissed him as "a puffball, who has never performed at that level", with egg on his face.

The impact of the Portuguese has been phenomenal this season. His goals, breathtaking tricks and clever assists have transformed United, widely tipped to endure another season as also-rans, into awe-inspiring treble hunters.

But three other, less discussed aspects of this story warrant closer inspection. Firstly, it is now clear that replacing David Beckham with a then largely unheard of 18-year-old kid from Madeira was a marketing masterstroke. Ronaldo has the pop-culture appeal Beckham used to have. He has brought back glamour and excitement to a United brand that has always been sold on the twin attractions of youth and attacking football. What's more, he can back up the hype on the pitch, something Beckham managed in one game only: England's laborious 2-2 World Cup qualifying draw with Greece in 2001.

Ronaldo's incredible marketability, which is only starting to be discovered by corporations, is a testament to the good work of United's scouting system. Alex Ferguson is fooling no one whenever he rolls out the old chestnut about his players urging him to sign the talented boy after coming up against him in a friendly with Sporting Lisbon; the club had obviously watched Ronaldo for a while.

Secondly, United's ability to hold on to the youngster, one of the world's most admired players, despite incredible offers from Real Madrid and Barcelona strikes a big blow for the Premier League's international standing. English football has had huge influxes of money for a while now, but even the biggest clubs have found it hard to attract top international players to these shores in the past.

The fact Ronaldo has extended his contract until 2012 could well alter the landscape. Only two England-based players have won the European Footballer of the Year award in the past 40 years – George Best in 1968 and Michael Owen in 2001. You'd expect more to win it in future.

The third aspect is the least visible but probably most important. It's arguable that Ronaldo's success is the culmination of a process that began with Eric Cantona, Gianfranco Zola and Dennis Bergkamp: he has finally made English football very European. A technical, wily foreigner who sometimes over-indulges on and off the pitch and who is not exactly a beacon of modesty is now the most revered player in the land. His flaws are generously overlooked; beauty trumps idealism. Remember his early days in England? For every article praising his skill, there were 10 that decried his penchant for going to ground a tad too easily. Sir Alex's protestations – "not even Atlas could withstand some of these tackles" – were in vain. To most people, Ronaldo, flash, showy, too much in love with the ball and himself, had the punishment on the pitch coming. When he played a very negligible role in the sending-off of United team-mate Wayne Rooney at the World Cup, he even became the "Winker", public enemy number one.

But then something strange happened. Ronaldo just kept on playing better and better, and even though his game is still not free of the occasional unprovoked tumble, the English public became so besotted with his extraordinary skill that his lackadaisical attitude to fair play is no longer such a big deal.

### Diving outrage

In Germany, we have always been fairly ambivalent about diving. After all, two of our three World Cups were won thanks to, let's say, debatable spot-kicks. It's a little frowned on, but only if your team are the victims. In England, however, it has long been considered an outrage, a crime much worse than breaking an opponent's leg. Especially if foreigners are the perpetrators, of course.

When English clubs started playing in Europe after the war, the idea that good, honest football was being infected with the disease of gamesmanship slowly took root. To this day, Rooney's sometimes dubious tumbles are quickly glossed over on television. "Rooney would never dive," one of the commentators will say, and everybody is supposed to nod in agreement. But this blatant hypocrisy is becoming exposed. Ian Wright unwittingly summed up the real attitude among football fans when he declared that "diving for England is all right" during the World Cup. If that's true, if it's really all a matter of perspective, then diving for United or Chelsea must be all right, too.

This new pragmatism, coupled with the increasing, unprecedented protection afforded to flair players by English referees, has created an environment in which players such as Ronaldo can now flourish. And his performances have richly rewarded English football for its new tolerance. Middlesbrough midfielder George Boateng badly misjudged the prevalent mood when he warned that Ronaldo would "one day get injured" by an irate defender. These Neanderthal sentiments are being marginalised.

English football's distinct style and preoccupations are slowly vanishing, at least at the top of the table. Ronaldo shows us that this might not be a bad thing at all. ●

> "Ronaldo just kept playing better and better, and despite him taking the occasional unprovoked tumble, the English public have become besotted with his amazing skill"

*Raphael Honigstein is the English football correspondent of German newspaper* Suddeutsche Zeitung

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Prize guy...Cristiano Ronaldo parades his PFA Player of the Year trophy after an astonishing season with Manchester United during which he has even won over some of his most ardent critics

# Strike of genius

The Argentinian starlet's wondergoal against Getafe has catapulted him into the realms of superstardom. By Keir Radnedge

THE SPANISH CUP, with all due respect, is hardly the world's most popular or clear cut competition. For one thing, matches are played not at the weekend but tucked away in midweek; and its format has been chopped and changed over recent years to try to encourage the top clubs to take it more seriously – i.e. by allowing in European contestants at a later stage than the rest.

Barcelona and Real Madrid have frequently used the Cup as a means to keep second-string players match fit and often fail to make the latter stages.

But then, once in a blue moon, the competition throws up a moment that awakens the entire Spanish game.

Earlier this season it was the match abandonment when Sevilla coach Juande Ramos was knocked out by a missile thrown from the crowd during a derby against Betis. But even that incident has faded into the background compared with the stroke/strike of genius by Lionel Messi.

Just under half an hour had gone of the semi-final first leg between Barcelona and Madrid minnows Getafe. The 19-year-old Argentinian collected the ball just inside his own half on the right wing, swivelled off one foot on to the other, then straightened out in an arrowing dash towards goal.

Finishing touch...Messi sends the ball into the net at the end of his amazing, slaloming run against Getafe

Suspicions about fragile thigh muscles have lurked around the young Messi but there was no evidence of any weakness here: he accelerated between two midfielders, increased speed, darted left between two more then stepped out right around keeper Luis Garcia before slipping the ball home at an angle. Surely, this was European football's goal of the season.

Commentators instantly drew comparisons with Diego Maradona's brilliant World Cup assault on the England defence in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final: a precocious little left-footed Argentinian undertaking an irresistible slalom through the left flank of defence... right down to the shimmy wide of the keeper and climactic shot home.

### Messimania

Messimania had come to Spain. Years earlier, one of Messi's youth coaches, Enrique Dominguez, had said: "Leo can do things with the ball that defy the laws of physics. The only other person I have ever seen do such things was Maradona."

Now Messi had emulated his hero. Maybe the stage was not quite as grand, the occasion not quite as demanding and the initial worldwide focus not as intense.

But every coach dreams of the confidence engendered by knowing he has just sent out, for the big match, players with the appropriate temperament. Barcelona's Frank Rijkaard and Argentina's Alfio Basile now know, if they ever doubted it, that Messi is such a player.

Nor is he a player of the single moment. During the 5-2 defeat of Getafe he also laid on the first goal for midfielder Xavi and scored another goal himself, just before the interval. Rijkaard said of his first: "It was a great goal from a talented player, a work of art."

Remarkably, Messi has been scoring goals for Barcelona for two years now – his first competitive strike a delicate chip set up by Ronaldinho on May 1, 2005 against Albacete.

Injuries to Henrik Larsson and then Maxi Lopez assisted Messi's promotion but he was unperturbed by the rush to action, saying: "I've worked most of the year with the first-team squad so, even if I haven't started so many games, I feel I've contributed to our success.

"I'm glad Roni gave me the chance to score because he has been like an elder brother since I came into the dressing room."

The goal made him the youngest league scorer in Barcelona's history. It also fired the club closer to their first league triumph in six years. He had made his league debut the previous October, against Espanyol. A year before that he had become the third youngest starter in the club's history, after Paulino Alcantara and Haruna Babangida, in a friendly against Porto on November 16, 2003.

In August 2004 he was the only nursery player whom Rijkaard took on a pre-season trip to Japan, where he aroused interest with a superb goal against Kashima Antlers.

By then he had already been a Barcelona player for more than three years, having been spirited away from Rosario club Newell's Old Boys at 13 in February 2001 accompanied by father Jorge, mother Celia, elder brothers Rodrigo and Matias, and younger sister Maria Sol.

Messi recalls: "The day we arrived in Barcelona we went to see the club facilities. Very impressive. We wanted to look inside Camp Nou but the security people wouldn't let us in because they thought I was telling lies.

"I will always tell everyone that I owe Barcelona everything because they paid for my growth hormone treatment. The injections never hurt. At least, I never let it show. I was too proud.

"One of the first things we did was go out to the beach. I'd come from a city with a river but nowhere near the sea and I wanted to see a beach. It was cold but I liked it from the start.

"It wasn't the same for my sister. She went to a school where everyone spoke Catalan and she couldn't understand a thing and didn't make any friends, so she, my mother and brother Matias went back to Argentina.

"The rest of the family stayed in Barcelona, so we taught my mother how to use a webcam so we could talk every day. She cried every time she saw me on television!"

At that point Messi was just another anonymous kid dreaming of making the grade. But in June and early July 2005 he made his mark internationally as captain and playmaker of Argentina's Under-20 World Youth Cup-winning side in Holland.

Messi's contributions were crucial. In the second round tie against Colombia it was his ceaseless probing that inspired Argentina after they had gone a goal down early in the second half. Six minutes later Messi exchanged passes with Neri Cardozo and hit a superb equaliser. He also had a shot cleared off the line in the frenetic final minutes before full-back Julio Barroso smacked the winner.

Hero status was maintained against European champions Spain in the quarter-finals. Argentina went ahead, Spain levelled, then Messi created a goal for Gustavo Oberman before cracking the killer third himself. And all this two days short of his 18th birthday.

### Top scorer, top player

Messi struck another superb goal and laid on the last-minute winner in the semi-final against Brazil. In the Final he scored twice, both from penalties, in the 2-1 defeat of Nigeria. Not surprisingly, as well as being the event's six-goal top scorer, he was also voted the tournament's top player.

That was the launch pad. Messi returned to Barcelona for pre-season training to find he had been promoted to the first-team squad, that negotiations for a long-term contract extension – until 2014 – were well advanced (with a buyout clause of £100million), and that Jose Pekerman was calling him into Argentina's senior squad for a friendly away to Hungary – the same opposition against whom Maradona launched his senior international career in 1977.

Not everything went according to plan. Messi was sent off in tears in Budapest within three minutes of appearing as a second-half substitute for throwing an elbow into the face of central defender Vilmos Vanczak.

### Paperwork delay

Then Barcelona's attempt to rush Messi into league action was stalled. The club had assumed that his residency in Spain gave him the status of a home-grown player; other clubs objected, and the federation upheld their protests, so a further six weeks were lost while Barcelona arranged the paperwork for Messi to obtain the Italian – and thus European Union – passport to which he was entitled through his grandparents.

Even then, this was not the end of the matter. Zaragoza protested that the season was under way and hence that Messi could not be registered to play for Barcelona until January. Ultimately, that last hurdle was disposed of and Messi duly scored six goals in 17 Liga appearances (including six as a sub).

Injury denied him an appearance against Arsenal in the Champions League Final in the Stade de France, but Messi was fit enough to go to Germany with Argentina for the World Cup. Here, unfortunately, Pekerman – perhaps still haunted by the Budapest red card – invested little trust in the youngster, handing him only one start, in the last group game against Holland, and leaving him on the bench during the quarter-final defeat by Germany.

But at club level the trophies kept on rolling in. Messi has won the League twice, and added the Spanish Super Cup at the start of the current campaign. He then collected the FIFPro Young Player of the Year award before being ruled out for the rest of 2006 with an ankle injury.

Barely had Messi regained fitness in March than he was scoring a first competitive hat-trick in a thrilling 3-3 draw with Real Madrid and then followed up with his moment of genius against Getafe.

Rijkaard says: "Messi has a lot of football ahead of him so we cannot afford to wear him out." But quite how the Dutchman will withstand the world's clamour to see more and more of the "new Maradona" remains to be seen. ●

## MARADONA ON MESSI

"I have seen the player who will inherit my place in Argentinian football and his name is Lionel Messi. Messi is beautiful to watch – my kind of player in our blue and white jersey. He's a leader and is offering classes in beautiful football. He has something different to any other player in the world."

Mutual appreciation... Messi and Maradona

Golden boy...holding the World Youth Cup trophy

No stopping him...Messi dribbles between Getafe's Alexis and Belenguer en route to goal

# Goooooooooooool!

SPANISH COMMENTATORS have a habit of dragging out the "Goal!" for as long as their breath can hold and repeating the word as if they're trying to break some sort of record. Or maybe they have something stuck in their throats. Even if it's a simple tap-in or a fluke, no sooner has the ball nestled in the net than they're off: Go-go-go-go! Goooooooooooooooooooooo!

This time, though, it was worth it. If anything warranted a collective commentators' cardiac arrest, it was Leo Messi's Spanish Cup goal against Getafe – a strike that caused websites to collapse and dominated television screens all over the world. Even Real Madrid TV paid homage.

But it was not just that the Barcelona teenager had scored a strike of stunning beauty, it was also that he reproduced touch-by-touch Maradona's famous goal against England in 1986. Catalan TV played the goals on a split screen and they were virtually indistinguishable.

The original...Maradona scores in '86

Messi, like Maradona, collected the ball on the right, around the halfway line. Where Maradona skipped past Peter Reid and Peter Beardsley, quick feet took Messi away from Javier Paredes and Ignacio "Nacho" Perez. Reid came back at Maradona but could not catch him; Nacho came back at Messi, and nor could he. Coming in from the right, Maradona cut inside Terry Butcher, and then straightened up to go through the gap between Butcher and Terry Fenwick, the ball never leaving his foot; Messi did the same with Alexis and Belenguer.

> **"Messi's strike caused websites to collapse and dominated TV screens worldwide. Even Real Madrid TV paid homage"**

Peter Shilton came out to meet Maradona, Luis Garcia came out to meet Messi. A dropped shoulder, a turn to the left and both men were past the keeper, Maradona putting the ball into the net, away from the despairing lunge of Gary Stevens, Messi eluding the dive of Pablo Redondo. Even the way the two men slipped to the floor in providing the final touch was almost identical.

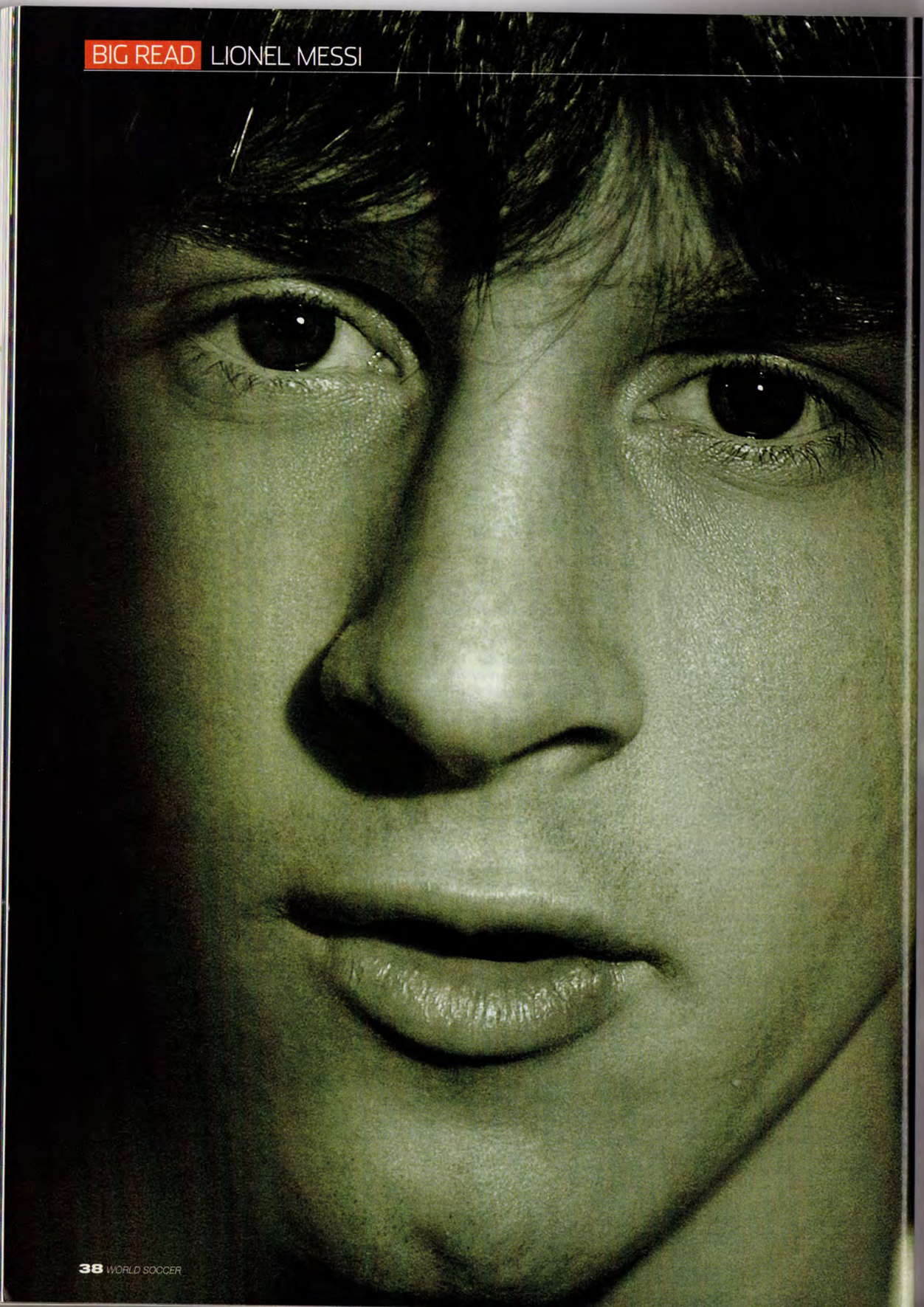
"What planet did you come from?" screamed the headline in *Marca*, echoing the famous commentary that accompanied Maradona's goal. Deco, Messi's team-mate, declared it the "best goal I have ever seen in my life". Nacho could only shrug: " I'll have to get used to the fact that I will be watching myself on television in 30 years' time."

He would certainly have been seeing himself on TV for the rest of the week. Messi's goal was everywhere. One reporter wrote: "I feel like crying. Holy Christ! Long live football! Long live Leo!" And that was in a rabidly pro-Real Madrid paper.

The following day the clamour was such that Messi was forced to give a press conference at Camp Nou, while players everywhere queued up to pay tribute. Getafe's Dani Guiza raved: "It doesn't matter that he's only 19; when you've scored a goal like that you can retire immediately."

But perhaps the greatest compliment came from Fernando Torres and his Atletico Madrid team-mates. "We were watching the game in the dressing room at the training ground," he said, "and when Messi scored the goal, every single one of us stood up and started to applaud."

*Sid Lowe*





# 'I'm never going to reach Maradona's level'

## Argentina, Barcelona, confidence...the youngster speaks out

**BARCELONA promoted you to the first-team squad after your success at the 2005 World Youth Cup. Was it a help or a hindrance to suddenly find yourself playing alongside stars such as Ronaldinho and Samuel Eto'o?**
Certainly not a hindrance! Quite the opposite. Also, the help and encouragement of all my team-mates – Roni and Samuel, but not only those two – has been brilliant. But this was not only the case in the first few weeks, it continues even now. No footballer should ever think he knows everything because he is fortunate enough to win some trophies. Football is a team game – and I learn all the time from my team-mates. This is the spirit that fills the dressing room and helps us win game after game. I have to laugh when I read stories in the media about squabbles among the players. How could we be as successful as we are if we were not united?

**Why Barcelona, and why so young?**
This is perfectly simple and even obvious once you know the background. I was 13 years old when they approached me and my family in Argentina and said they believed so much in my potential as a footballer that they wanted me to transfer to Europe – not just myself, but also all my family. You see, this was not merely a simple transfer of one player changing shirts or changing cities or even changing countries. It was a huge gesture of belief in a boy that involved his entire family.

**Is it true that even before you moved to Spain you had started taking a growth hormone prescribed by the Barcelona medical staff?**
Yes, this is perfectly true but not unusual. I was not big for my age and it's well known that such treatment can be prescribed quite properly for children who are below average height and weight. I am not the only player who has benefited. I think you will find that Zico was also helped in this same manner when he was a young teenager. At all stages Barcelona oversaw the dosage.

This helped my confidence, too. I learned that it was possible to play and hold my own even in games in which all the opposing players were head and shoulders taller than me. Football is not only a game of skill and mental agility but also one of physique.

**It seems surprising to observers that you have not found it easy to gain confidence in your own ability – even though one of your most outspoken public supporters has been Diego Maradona. Can you explain that?**
Maradona has been very kind with the comments he has made about me and the way I play. But he was a unique footballer. No one else has managed to do the things he did with a football. So while I am grateful for his support and confidence, I know I am never going to reach his level. There is no connection.

**Was the amazing atmosphere at Liverpool, created by their fans, one of the reasons Barca were eliminated from the Champions League?**
Atmosphere does not score goals. I was barely aware of the crowd when we lined up before the game. Once I cross the white line and go out on to the pitch I shut out everything except my focus on the ball and the game. It was massively disappointing to lose to Liverpool because we were proud to be champions of Europe. But I am confident we will get our crown back. And that is not all. We can win both the Spanish League and Cup this season, and that would make this another great campaign for us.

**Do you have any regrets about the World Cup, about losing on penalties to Germany?**
You always have regrets after you lose a game but, for me, the bigger picture was that I had played in my first World Cup finals at the age of 18 and scored a goal – and to go out to the hosts is never something to be ashamed of. In fact, I am confident we would have beaten Italy in the semi-finals if we had gone through...but that was not to be. Next time, maybe!

**How do you feel about having been sent off in your first senior international for Argentina?**
It wasn't the way I dreamed the game would be! I just went past [Hungarian Vilmos] Vanczak and he grabbed my shirt. I wanted to free myself so I could carry on, and the referee judged that I had elbowed him and sent me off.

**Your success has prompted speculation about a move to Italy, England or even Real Madrid. Is there any substance to any of this?**
None whatsoever. I have grown tired of being asked the same question. In fact, I now tell journalists before interviews that this is a question not worthy of an answer. I am proud to play for Barcelona; this has been the only club of my professional career and the only club in my mind and my heart. There is nothing else to say.

**What did the hat-trick against Real Madrid mean to you personally, never mind its importance to your club?**
It was important to me for three reasons. The first is that it brought us a point against Madrid in a very big game. The second was that it helped me prove to myself that I can play a top role in a big match. The third is that in the past two seasons in which I have been in the first-team squad I know myself that I have not been scoring enough goals – and that was strange because at youth level I was always one of the top scorers, both with Barcelona and Argentina. I have never been an out-and-out striker but I have always tried to attack goal as often as possible. Against Madrid, I proved to myself that I can be confident of my ability to score goals in the most important games.

It was a great moment for me when, at the end of the game, the first player to congratulate me was Raul, because he has always been one of my heroes. ●

*Interview by Keir Radnedge*

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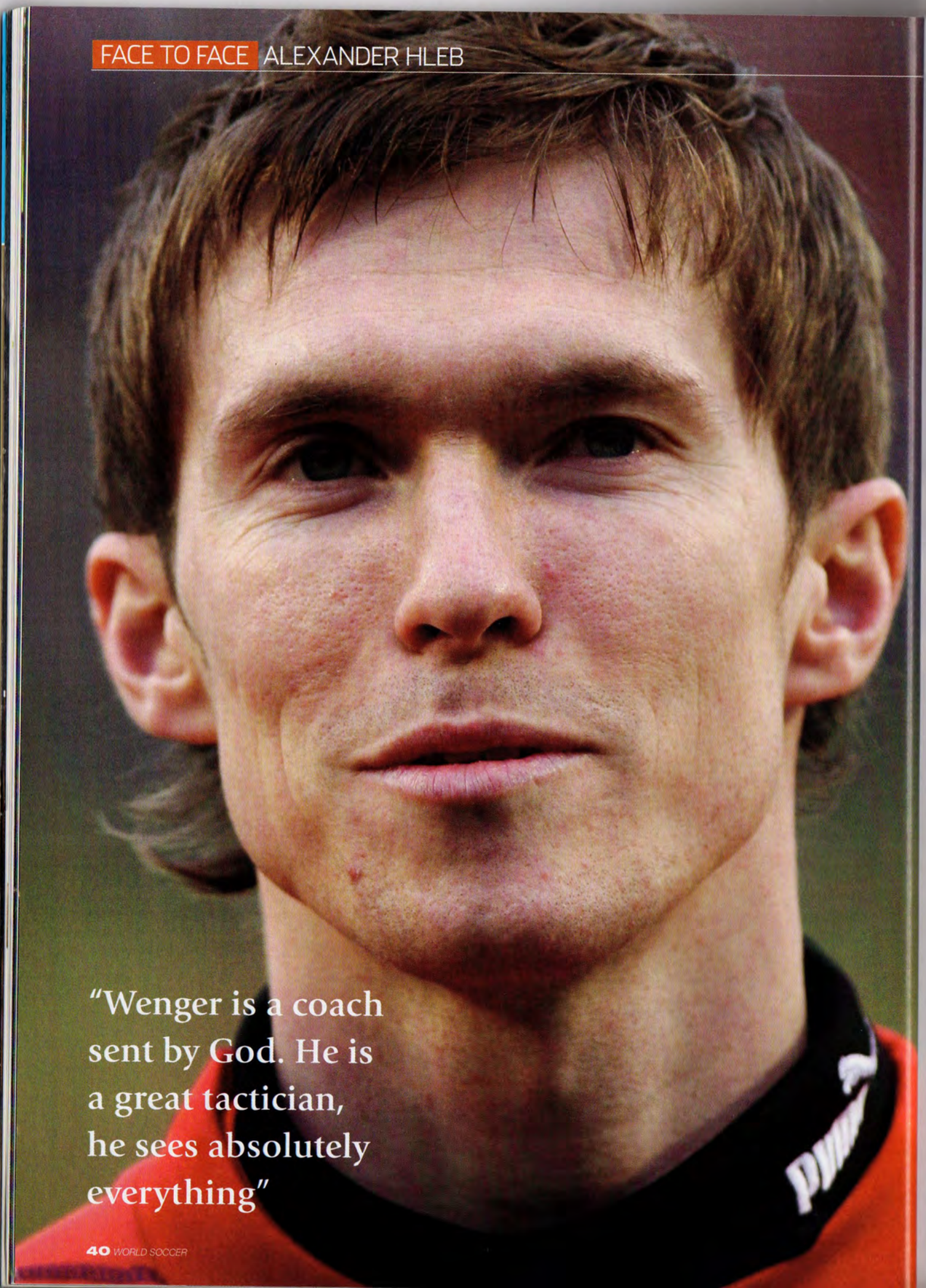

"Wenger is a coach sent by God. He is a great tactician, he sees absolutely everything"





# Premier reflections

## Arsenal's Belorussian international looks back on his first two years in England

**YOU'RE COMING to the end of your second season in England; are you now at home in the Premiership?**
I'd say I've almost fully adapted, though I still need a little more time to feel completely at home. Everything is good for me here, but my mood has been affected a little because things have not been great in terms of the results this season. As a professional footballer, your sense of well-being is tied up with events on the pitch.

The most important thing is that I am enjoying being part of Arsenal. I am at a great club, playing in the best league in the world. The fact that three English teams reached the Champions League semi-finals is proof of that.

**The fact that Arsenal were not one of them must surely hurt, especially after coming so close to winning the trophy last season?**
We made some basic errors when losing to PSV [in the first knockout round]. They are a middle-ranking team in European terms. To lose in Eindhoven the way we did, and then to fail to win at home – there are no excuses. That was one of the biggest disappointments of the season.

**At least you have now secured a place in the Champions League for next season. How important is that?**
I think it's vital for a club like Arsenal to be in the Champions League. And I think it's important for the Champions League to have us there. We are one of the best footballing sides in Europe, so it's our obligation to make sure we are part of the main competition.

**Arsenal have done well against the other top teams in the Premiership, but they are too easily muscled out of games against teams such as Bolton and Blackburn. Do you agree?**
All the opponents in England are tough, so we can't go looking for excuses. We have to continue playing our own game. It's not a case of sacrificing anything in order to win. We can win by playing our own game. However, we've definitely been lacking something, a certain cold-bloodedness. There's no doubt that, by our own standards, this season has not been a very successful one. We've lost a lot of points in the League that we should have taken comfortably. We've thrown away chances to win games that should have been ours, and we've given away easy goals at times.

**You have been without Thierry Henry for much of the season. How badly has he been missed?**
Of course, being without Thierry has been a big loss for us, but we can't use that as an excuse. This squad has plenty of other players who are capable of scoring goals.

**Do you think you personally should score more goals?**
Definitely. It is a problem for me; it was the same at Stuttgart. Often I get into shooting positions and then hear a team-mate calling for me to pass. Maybe I need to be a bit more egotistical at times. It's something I've been working on. In training Mr Wenger often gets me doing special exercises in which I'm forced to finish the attack with a shot on goal. I think next season will be better.

**Wenger is famous for recasting players in a new role. Has he asked you to modify your game?**
At Stuttgart I played just behind the main striker, and the play all went through me. At Arsenal I've got a different role – and it took me a while to adapt to the constant movement on the right side of midfield.

**How much of an influence has Wenger had on your game?**
He's a coach sent by God. Wenger is a great tactician, he sees absolutely everything; he knows how to find the key to every player. I'm loving being able to work under him. He supported me through the difficult times early on and carried on believing in me. I still remember him saying: "Alexander, I don't just buy any player; I watched you for two years. Everyone finds it hard at first, especially if you come from another country. I'm convinced everything will work out." Those words helped me a lot.

**This Arsenal team is still very young and perhaps lacking in experience compared to your main rivals. But presumably that provides great cause for optimism in the future?**
We are a very young team, but I wouldn't say we are a team for the future. We are a team for now. We've got everything it takes to succeed. We've had some bad luck this season and missed some opportunities. Now the main thing is that we make sure this doesn't happen again next season. We need to learn from our mistakes.

**Turning to the Belarus national team, you have a vital double-header against Bulgaria in June. Do you think you can qualify for Euro 2008?**
Every year we say we have a small chance, and it's true there is always a chance, but there are too many ifs and buts. We are moving forward, but the steps we are taking are still too small. To be honest, it will be very hard for us. We have to be realistic, we are a small country. But playing in a major finals with my country is one of my greatest dreams. We just have to keep trying.

**Your younger brother, Vyacheslav, is now a regular in the national team and we hear he may play in Britain next season. Is that right?**
He seems to be doing OK. He's back in Belarus now [with MTZ-Ripo], where the season is just starting, but the idea is that he spends a couple of months there and then moves to Hearts in Scotland. It's a great opportunity for him.

**Any plans for the summer?**
I am due to get married, which will be a major event for me. But aside from that I just want to make sure I rest properly and am fully refreshed for the new season. ●

*Interview by Dan Brennan*

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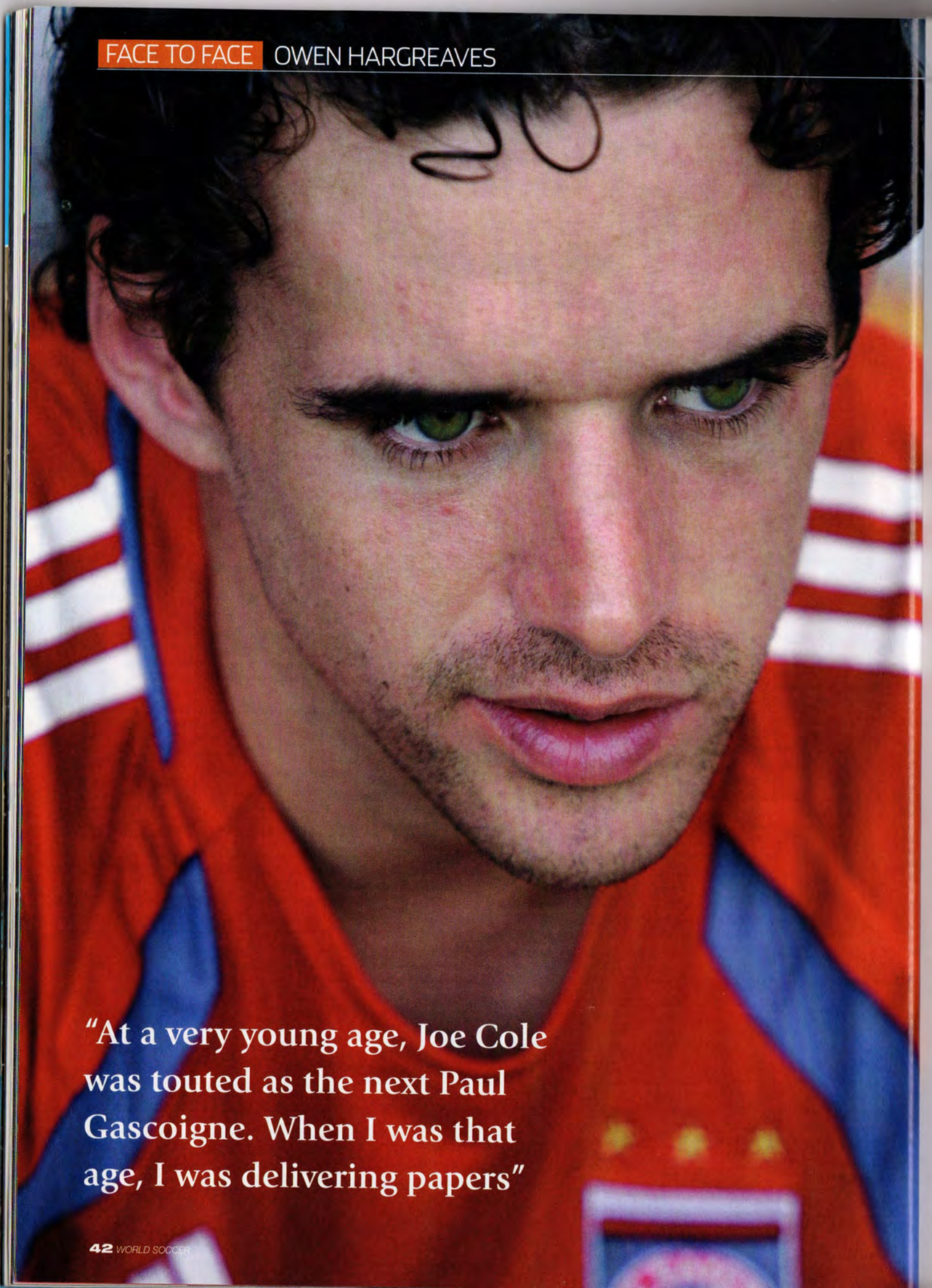

"At a very young age, Joe Cole was touted as the next Paul Gascoigne. When I was that age, I was delivering papers"





# The outsider

## Bayern's Canada-born midfielder talks about life as a model player

**YOU'RE OFTEN held up as a model English footballer: talented and articulate without a pop-star lifestyle. Would you agree?**
That's for other people to judge. You are a product of your environment and I'm very fortunate to have a great family, who have really supported me and have given me great values along the way. I moved to Germany at a young age and it really helped me grow up. And I've tried to take the best of my experiences from Canada, Germany and England.

**You were born in Canada and you play your club football in Germany. Does this "distance" help when you play for England?**
The way I grew up was probably different from that of many of the England players, such as Joe Cole, who at an extremely young age was touted as the next Paul Gascoigne. When I was that age, I was delivering newspapers. There are a lot of players who have grown up used to that environment, but I think it depends on the individual and your characteristics.

**When you first broke into the Bayern team you were more of an attacking player than you are now. Did you consciously decide to be more defensive?**
I have been an attack-minded defensive midfielder – I don't just sit [in front of the back four] because in some games I win a lot of balls and then try to break forward. But I've consciously tried to choose my moments to get forward.

**Was it daunting for you as a young player to share a dressing room with big stars such as Steffan Effenberg and Oliver Kahn?**
I looked up to those players, though it was different on the pitch – then, everyone's fair game. I was so determined on the pitch and I never backed down from anybody, because that's my nature, I'm very competitive. I think at that time people interpreted it incorrectly. They thought that I was a bit cheeky or arrogant. But off the pitch I didn't really say anything, kept myself to myself and just watched the senior players to see why some were successful and others weren't.

**Was it the same when you got into the England squad?**
With senior players like Teddy Sheringham and David Seaman, I didn't say anything. But they'd put their arm round me and ask how I was doing. It surprised me because I wasn't accustomed to that in Munich.

**Are England more or less attacking under Steve McClaren?**
It's nothing to do with the manager. It's the players who are out on the pitch and control the game. We are extremely well-prepared, but the manager can't control what actually happens in a game.

**Before the World Cup in Germany it would probably be fair to say England fans hadn't seen the best of you. What about now?**
I'm getting better and I'm learning each season. Football at this level is extremely difficult. There are so many games and the next game is always the most important. When you play for a club like Bayern, you're in every competition – Cup, League, Champions League – and then there's the national team. There's never a break, so it's very difficult on the body. But I'm only 26 and there's a lot more to come from me.

**Bayern sacked coach Felix Magath in January. Was that the right decision?**
We were extremely successful under him but have struggled this season, and any time you struggle at a club like Bayern Munich things will be changed.

**Before the winter break Werder Bremen were the darlings of the German media. Did it annoy you that they were getting all the attention?**
I don't care about other teams. It doesn't bother me. They've got some great individual players such as Klose and Diego – both fantastic players. I think Diego was the reason Bremen played so well at the beginning of the season. He was immense and he completely dominated the way Bremen played. But now I think teams have adapted to the way he plays.

**Where do Bayern need to strengthen?**
There are players retiring, like Mehmet Scholl, and players leaving, like Hasan Salihamidzic, who's been a massive player for the club over the years. Players come and go – it's normally only one or two, but this season it could be more. I think the management might be looking to buy some offensive players: a striker plus a playmaker.

**There has been a lot of press attention in Germany recently about the amount of diving in the Bundesliga. What do you make of it?**
I think there's a lot of diving going on and it's a disgrace. Diving has never been a consideration for me – I can't dive to save my life. I get kicked all the time and I should be getting free-kicks but the referee doesn't see it. Players are trying to con the referee and at this level it's disappointing. English culture has it correct in that people don't dive. The players are very honest – sometimes too honest because we often get the wrong end of bad decisions.

**Is German football in good health?**
When you look at the stadiums, I think it's probably one of the healthiest leagues. I watched Roma against Manchester United on TV and there were lots of empty seats. That's top football – the quarter-finals of the Champions League. Some of the best players in Europe and there were empty seats. In the Bundesliga every stadium is pretty much full every game. We've got 70,000 fans at Munich week in, week out. Maybe there's not the individual talent that there is in Spain, Italy or England, but I think the Bundesliga is in extremely good health. ●

*Interview by Paul Wheatley*

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# EUROPE'S MOST WANTED

## WHO'S GOING WHERE AND WHY IN THIS SUMMER'S TRANSFER MARKET

**Alex**
Position: Defender
Club: PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
Country: Brazil
Some fine displays in Europe for PSV have made the Brazilian centre-back hot property. The question is, does he belong to PSV or Chelsea?

**Daniel Alves**
Position: Defender
Club: Sevilla (Spa)
Country: Brazil
All the talk of Sevilla's outstanding full-back moving on – to favourites Barcelona, Real Madrid or England – should finally come to pass.

**Deco**
Position: Midfielder
Club: Barcelona (Spa)
Country: Portugal
Internazionale have identified the need for a top-class playmaker. The Barca star is apparently their number one priority.

**Samuel Eto'o**
Position: Forward
Club: Barcelona (Spa)
Country: Cameroon
All the signs are that the Cameroon front man is unsettled at Barcelona. Cue the money men in the Premiership and Internazionale.

**Klaas Jan Huntelaar**
Position: Forward
Club: Ajax
Country: Holland
Ajax recently issued a hands-off warning to any club hoping to lure their young goalscorer. No one in England or Italy was listening.

**Jorge Andrade**
Position: Defender
Club: Deportivo La Coruna (Spa)
Country: Portugal
Barcelona and Chelsea should dominate the bidding for the Portuguese central defender.

**Kaka**
Position: Midfielder
Club: Milan (Ita)
Country: Brazil
Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon will do everything he can to get the Brazilian star. But will it be enough?

**Miroslav Klose**
Position: Forward
Club: Werder Bremen
Country: Germany
The striker has long been toying with the idea of moving abroad. Juventus or Barcelona could make his wish come true.

**Frank Lampard**
Position: Midfielder
Club: Chelsea
Country: England
Rumours persist that the free-scoring midfielder will buy up the last two years of his Chelsea contract and high-tail it to Barcelona.

**Florent Malouda**
Position: Midfielder
Club: Lyon
Country: France
No matter that his current deal with Lyon runs until 2011. Should Arsenal or Juventus make a move, the wide midfielder will be off.

**Christoph Metzelder**
Position: Defender
Club: Borussia Dortmund
Country: Germany
Tired of making do at under-achieving Dortmund, the defender is looking to migrate. Juventus, Real Madrid and Spurs are interested.

**Philippe Mexes**
Position: Defender
Club: Roma (Ita)
Country: France
Virtually the entire G-14 are excited by the Frenchman's talent as well as the cut-price £7.5million buy-out clause in his contract with Roma.

Nick Bidwell and Gavin Hamilton report

EUROPE'S RICHEST CLUBS are preparing for what is likely to be one of the busiest summers ever in the transfer market. A combination of new television deals, new investors and new coaching regimes means major personnel changes are on the cards.

TV revenues continue to rise. In England, the Premier League's new deal with Sky and Setanta will net each club an extra £20million on average. In Spain, Barcelona and Real Madrid will receive an extra £60m each from their new broadcasting contracts.

Then there is the cash injection stemming from new administrations or financial restructuring. Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez has been promised at least £30m by American owners George Gillett and Tom Hicks to spend on new players, and the Juventus board recently approved a £71m recapitalisation to make extra funds available for coach Didier Deschamps. The directors of Lyon celebrated a sixth straight French league title by adding £50m to the club's budget for the 2007-08 season.

Not all the extra cash will be spent on transfer fees; player wages will eat up a large chunk. Manchester United have already spent heavily by securing Cristiano Ronaldo on an improved five-year contract with reported wages of £120,000 a week. That's a total outlay of more than £31m. But despite the Portuguese star

committing his future to the club, Real Madrid are insisting that he could still join them this summer.

"We knew it could happen," Madrid's sporting director Predrag Mijatovic said after Ronaldo agreed to the United deal. "All we can do is see what happens in the summer. I know it will be very difficult, but nothing should be discarded. In football these days, what happens one day can be changed by the next."

Madrid's coaching situation is uncertain. The local media expects

**Rodrigo Palacio**
Position: Forward
Club: Boca Juniors
Country: Argentina
Undoubtedly the best home-based Argentinian attacker of the moment, the pacy striker has his pick of leading Spanish sides.

Jose Mourinho to be installed at the Bernabeu, even though Fabio Capello may well have delivered the league title for the first time for four seasons.

Whoever is coach, the Madrid hierarchy are planning major player signings. President Ramon Calderon, whose time in charge has been beset by problems, is desperate for a high-profile, trophy signing to boost his reputation. Cristiano Ronaldo was the obvious target, but now Kaka has also entered the frame. Last summer, during Madrid's troubled presidential election campaign, Calderon pledged to sign the Brazilian if he got the job. The chances of him finally delivering on the promise depend on whether or not Milan manage to sign Ronaldinho from Barcelona.

Valencia striker David Villa is a more realistic target for Madrid, along with Chelsea winger Arjen Robben and Werder Bremen midfielder Diego.

Madrid are close to signing defender Christoph Metzelder from Borussia Dortmund, but face tough decisions over the loan-swap deal with Arsenal of Jose Antonio Reyes (currently at the Bernabeu) and Julio

> **"Whoever is coach, the Real Madrid hierarchy are planning major player signings"**

**Ricardo Quaresma**
Position: Forward
Club: FC Porto
Country: Portugal
Italian and Spanish emissaries wax lyrical about the winger. So do those from the Premier League, who see him as another Cristiano Ronaldo.

Baptista (in London). Neither is wanted on a permanent basis by either club, so both face the prospect of starting the new season somewhere else.

Madrid are likely to readily find takers for forward Antonio Cassano, midfielder Emerson and defender Francisco Pavon, with the latter already close to joining Bolton.

Meanwhile, the Bernabeu is set to say farewell to its last two foreign galacticos: Roberto Carlos, whose contract is not being renewed, and Los Angeles-bound David Beckham. There is also speculation in Madrid that World Player of the Year Fabio Cannavaro is keen on a return to Italy, having not enjoyed his first season in La Liga.

Madrid sports daily *Marca* recently published the unlikely claim that Argentina forward Javier Saviola has agreed to become the first player to switch between Barcelona and Real Madrid since Luis Figo in 2000. Saviola expects to leave Camp Nou when his contract expires in June, and the story may have been an attempt by his agent to attract deals from elsewhere.

### Barca changes

Major changes are afoot at Barcelona, not least on the coaching front, where Frank Rijkaard is widely expected to take a sabbatical. The Dutchman has missed compatriot Henk Ten Cate, who quit as assistant last summer to become head coach at Ajax. Ten Cate offered tactical nous as well as acting as bad cop to Rijkaard's good cop. Johan Neeskens has not been as effective in the assistant role, a fact reflected in Barcelona's performances this season.

Across Europe, clubs are waiting to pounce should Rijkaard's successor signal major personnel changes. As well as Ronaldinho being linked with Milan – whose owner, Silvio Berlusconi, has long coveted him – Deco is in the frame to join Internazionale.

The future of Samuel Eto'o is equally unclear. The Cameroon striker is a favourite of Barca president Joan Laporta, but has been a troubling influence in the dressing room this season. A number of clubs in England and Italy would be interested in him were he to become available.

Meanwhile, Barca are favourites to sign Sevilla's swashbuckling full-back Daniel Alves, though they will face competition from Real Madrid. The Catalans have also been linked with Zaragoza striker Diego Milito and Valencia midfielder David Albelda.

French full-back Eric Abidal looks set to leave Lyon for Spain, with Barcelona or Valencia the most likely destination. Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas admitted last month: "I could offer him a contract for life, but I understand that his spell at Lyon is over." Valencia are lining up Alexis of Getafe and Espanyol striker Luis Garcia. The latter could become the replacement for Villa.

Villarreal have agreed to sign centre-back Roberto Ayala when his contract with Valencia expires in June.

In Germany, Bayern Munich's provisional budget of £21m will rise to around £40m if, as expected, they accept a substantial bid from Manchester United for midfielder Owen Hargreaves.

Big changes are already afoot in Munich following the re-appointment of Ottmar Hitzfeld. The coach admits that a number of players will be

**Franck Ribery**
Position: Forward
Club: Marseille
Country: France
Marseille president Pape Diouf has officially put the attacking midfielder up for sale. Arsenal, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich head the queue.





following Hargreaves out of the door – they are believed to include Roque Santa Cruz, Claudio Pizarro and Ali Karimi. Mehmet Scholl is retiring, while Hasan Salihamidzic has agreed to join Juventus. To replace them, Hitzfeld says there are: "Six, seven or maybe eight new players on their way. That's more than half a team. We're talking radical change. We know we don't have the finances to attract the true superstars, so we have to look hard for potential. We need to find a young Kaka."

Finances will be tighter than expected if Bayern fail to qualify for the Champions League, but a priority will be to fill the creative void left by Michael Ballack's departure for Chelsea last summer.

"We know we're short on quality," admits general manager Uli Hoeness. "It's up to me to put this right. Clearly it will be that much harder if we're not in the Champions League."

Bayern have already signed Turkish midfielder Hamit Altintop from Schalke, striker Jan Schlaudraff

**Ronaldinho**
Position: Forward
Club: Barcelona (Spa)
Country: Brazil
After a difficult season, could the Brazilian's time at Barca shortly be up? Milan fervently hope that's the case.

(Alemannia Aachen) and midfielder Jose Ernesto Sosa (Estudiantes). Targets include Chelsea's Robben, Miroslav Klose (Werder Bremen), Rafael Van der Vaart (Hamburg) and Marcell Jansen (Monchengladbach).

Werder Bremen are resigned to losing Klose, whose contract expires next summer, although the player has already broken an apparent gentleman's agreement not to negotiate with another Bundesliga club when meeting Hitzfeld and Hoeness recently. "The meeting lasted only 20 minutes, but it was inappropriate," Klose said.

> **"A priority for Bayern will be to fill the creative void left by Ballack's departure"**

In France, Lyon will attempt their assault on a seventh consecutive title by making a number of new signings. Bernard Lacombe, recruitment advisor to president Aulas, says: "Our top priority is a right-sided attacker, someone with speed and explosiveness...If we lose two or three of our top players, that will be a blow. It's always tricky replacing the tried and tested...I fervently hope Juninho stays with us. He still has much to offer, even at 32. He probably will not be able to play 50 games a season as he does now. But in 30 fixtures he will be a precious player."

But the Brazilian could well leave, along with Abidal, keeper Gregory Coupet, Florent Malouda and Claudio Cacapa. Lyon have been linked with several names, including Toulouse forward Johan Elmander (also a target for a number of Premier League clubs), David Trezeguet, Franck Ribery, Younes Kaboul, Jean Makoun and Ricardo Quaresma.

### Serial spenders

The reputation of Italian champions Inter as serial spenders has prompted great speculation about their potential targets. As well as Deco, they include Eto'o, Quaresma, Xabi Alonso (Liverpool), Frank Lampard (Chelsea) and Mahamadou Diarra (Real Madrid). However, coach Roberto Mancini admits: "Personally I'd be delighted with an all-Italian trio of reinforcements. To have [Gianluigi] Buffon, [Daniele] De Rossi and [Luca] Toni in our ranks would take us to an even higher level."

At Juventus, major signings are planned to boost the club's return to Serie A. "The board has shown its ambition for this club with its decision to increase share capital and the substantial amount of money made available for team strengthening," says coach Deschamps. "We already like to think we have a Serie A squad but if we can bring in one or two class acts per area of the field, we should be very competitive."

In addition to Salihamidzic, Juve have been linked with Klose, Ribery, Toni, Milito, Cannavaro, Robinho (Real Madrid), Palermo defender Andrea Barzagli, Werder Bremen midfielder Torsten Frings, Inter defender Walter Samuel, Barca defender Gianluca Zambrotta and Milan forward Alberto Gilardino. Making way for the new names could be Trezeguet, Buffon and Jonathan Zebina.

Buffon has also been linked to Milan, whose priority will be to hold on to key men. "Unlike last

## DONE DEALS

- **HAMIT ALTINTOP**
  Schalke to Bayern
- **ROBERTO AYALA**
  Valencia to Villarreal
- **NADIR BELHADJ**
  Sedan to Lyon

- **HASAN SALIHAMIDZIC**
  Bayern to Juventus
- **JAN SCHLAUDRAFF**
  Alemannia Aachen to Bayern
- **JOSE ERNESTO SOSA**
  Estudiantes to Bayern
- **ANDRII VORONIN**
  Leverkusen to Liverpool

- **JONATHAN WOODGATE**
  Real Madrid to Middlesbrough

## TRANSFER BUDGETS

| | £million |
|---|---|
| Juventus | 71 |
| Chelsea | 60 |
| Internazionale | 60 |
| Real Madrid | 60 |
| Barcelona | 50 |
| Lyon | 50 |
| Milan | 50 |
| Liverpool | 40 |
| Manchester United | 30 |
| Bayern Munich | 21 |
| Arsenal | 20 |

Valuable additions?...Real Madrid have £60m with which to augment their squad

year when we were preoccupied with the fall-out from Calciopoli [the match-fixing scandal], we will be able to operate a rational recruitment drive in the coming weeks," says Adriano Galliani, Berlusconi's right-hand man. "The key for us is to retain the services of Kaka, an extraordinary young man and footballer."

As well as Ronaldinho, Milan have been linked to Cassano, Zambrotta, Saviola, Lille pair Mathieu Bodmer and Kader Keita, and Udinese striker Vincenzo Iaquinta.

### Modest activity

Manchester United's transfer activity will be modest, according to manager Alex Ferguson. "There won't be sweeping changes," he said. "Maybe just one or two coming in."

A defensive midfielder in the Hargreaves mould is the priority. Last summer, his projected move to the Premier League stalled because clubs refused to pay Bayern's asking price of £7m. Now that has almost trebled.

United are also believed to be in the market for a striker. They were linked with Klaas Jan Huntelaar, though he may stay at Ajax for another season. Interest in Atletico Madrid's Fernando Torres has cooled, even though the buyout clause in his contract has fallen to £18m. Another option is Jermain Defoe, who has slipped down the pecking order at Tottenham.

Given Ferguson's good record for signing young talent, the stories linking United with Sporting Lisbon's Nani, Mexican Andres Guardado and Southampton's Gareth Bale may not be without foundation.

Liverpool have already agreed to sign Ukraine forward Andrii Voronin from Bayer Leverkusen on a free transfer. A renewed bid for Benfica's Simao Sabrosa would provide manager Benitez with the attacking width he desires. The extra funds reportedly promised by the new owners has prompted speculation about two forwards – Villa and Eto'o.

Arsenal are unlikely to have the budget to sign either of them, and may make only a few additions to their squad. Manager Arsene Wenger has stated his desire to stay on, at least until his contract expires in 2008, despite the departure of close confidante David Dein, the former vice-chairman.

**Carlos Tevez**
Position: Forward
Club: West Ham (Eng)
Country: Argentina
Outstanding for West Ham this season, the front-runner has earned the right to be the first in the lifeboat if the East Londoners are relegated.

> "One option for Man Utd is Jermain Defoe, who has slipped down the pecking order at Spurs"

**Luca Toni**
Position: Forward
Club: Fiorentina
Country: Italy
Internazionale and Juventus look likely to slug it out for the prolific Fiorentina striker, who is rated at £13-15 million.





In previous years, Arsenal have eschewed the summer transfer market, instead waiting until the January window. But signing a wide midfielder is a priority. Ribery and Malouda would both fit the bill.

Chelsea have the means to out-muscle all other clubs in the transfer market, but speculation about Mourinho's position has made deal-planning difficult.

A new striker and centre-back are likely to be signed, whoever is in charge. Chelsea have the budget to meet Valencia's valuation of Villa or to entice Eto'o to England.

Brazilian centre-back Alex, currently at PSV, is an obvious candidate to make the switch to London, though if Mourinho does stay, Jorge Andrade could swell the Portuguese contingent at Stamford Bridge.

The manager's future has been a constant source of rumour and conjecture for a year. Chief executive Peter Kenyon tried to dampen speculation when he insisted: "Jose's got a contract until 2010 and we're not going to sack him. He's got the full support of the board; that's really important. We've been linked with something like 14 managers now, I think, but we've not got a list and we're not looking."

However, Kenyon expressed similar sentiments in 2003 about Claudio Ranieri. "Claudio has three years to run on his contract," he said then. "The speculation about his future and false links to other managers is unhelpful." Three months later, Ranieri was sacked.

As with many things this summer, do not believe everything you read. ●

**Rafael Van der Vaart**
Position: Midfielder
Club: Hamburg (Ger)
Country: Holland
Johan Cruyff was right. The Dutch playmaker deserves a far bigger stage than Hamburg. Expect Bayern to feature strongly in the auction.

> "Speculation about Jose Mourinho's position at Chelsea has made deal-planning difficult"

**David Villa**
Position: Forward
Club: Valencia
Country: Spain
The subject of a £100million buyout clause, the Valencia goal machine will not come cheap. But since when have Chelsea counted the pennies?

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# SCOUTING FOR BUSINESS

**ARSENAL HAVE LED THE WAY AND CHELSEA ARE NOW KEEN TO FOLLOW. JOHN HOLMESDALE AND ANDREW SLEIGHT REPORT ON THE RUSH TO SIGN THE WORLD'S BRIGHTEST TEENAGE TALENT**

THIS SUMMER'S transfer market will feature some of the game's biggest names, with the names of Samuel Eto'o, Kaka and Ronaldinho all set to appear in "will they, won't they?" stories throughout the silly season. But behind the scenes, away from the newspaper headlines and speculation, another battle is taking shape, as clubs go to increasingly involved lengths to scout and sign the world's brightest young talent.

The Bosman ruling transformed the European transfer market virtually overnight in the mid-1990s. Now, a decade on, clubs are taking advantage of European labour laws to recruit teenagers from across the continent. Even FIFA regulations forbidding the transfer of under-18s between continents has not deterred clubs. "There are ways round the rules," says one agent.

The rules are not exactly being broken but they are being sidestepped, particularly by top English clubs, whose scouting and recruitment techniques are becoming more and more sophisticated. Players are being "parked" at feeder clubs in foreign countries where employment laws are less strict than those in the UK. In the case of Carlos Vela (see box, page 52), Arsenal's 18-year-old Mexican, his whole family has being relocated in order to bypass the regulations.

Clubs are also taking advantage of loopholes in foreign contract laws to sign players. When it came to signing Cesc Fabregas, Arsenal took advantage of a Spanish law that prevents players signing professional forms until they have turned 18.

"It's a highly competitive market. Every club is trying to recruit the best players. In the last few years it has really intensified," says Les Reed, the former technical director of the English FA who helped set up Charlton's overseas scouting structure. "The net has been cast very wide compared to 15 or 20 years ago, when you focused on the boys on your

BRAZIL
DENILSON

MEXICO
CARLOS VELA

SPAIN
CESC FABREGAS

SPAIN
FRAN MERIDA

## ARSENAL

Arsenal's youth recruitment is truly multi-national. As well as first-teamers Fabregas, Denilson and Traore, the reserves feature players from Cyprus, France, Holland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain. Others are on loan in England's Championship (Larsson, Bendtner, Lupoli) and in Spain (Vela).

ITALY
ARTURO LUPOLI

ITALY
VITO MANNONE

HOLLAND
NACER BARAZITE

HOLLAND
VINCENT VAN DEN BERG

SWEDEN
SEBASTIAN LARSSON

DENMARK
NIKLAS BENDTNER

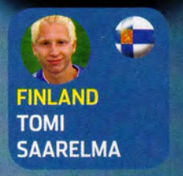
PORTUGAL
RUI FONTE

DENMARK
MORTEN NIELSEN

DENMARK
PER WEIHRAUCH

ISRAEL
BEN SAHAR

PORTUGAL
FABIO FERREIRA


FINLAND
TOMI SAARELMA

SWITZERLAND
JONAS ELMER

SPAIN
SERGIO TEJERA

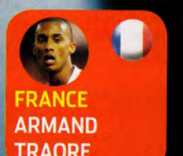
PORTUGAL
RICARDO FERNANDES

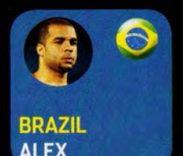
BELGIUM
YVES MA KALAMBAY

CYPRUS
GIORGOS EFREM

FRANCE
CARL PARISIO

POLAND
WOJCIECH SZCZESNY


FRANCE
ARMAND TRAORE


BRAZIL
ALEX

SLOVAKIA
MIROSLAV STOCH

NIGERIA
JOHN OBI MIKEL

## CHELSEA

Roman Abramovich has spent £500m on Chelsea but is keen for the club to become more self-sufficient. The youth academy boasts players from all over Europe, Nigerian Mikel and Israel's Sahar have broken into the first team, while Brazilian Alex is "parked" at PSV.

own doorstep and a club would rarely go out of their catchment area to find players."

Spurred on by the example of Arsenal's multi-national youth academy, as well as Barcelona's signing of Argentinian starlet Lionel Messi at the age of 13, Europe's other leading clubs are indeed going further afield in the search for new talent.

Under Arsene Wenger – whose personal mantra is "I don't look at a player's passport, only his talent" – Arsenal have developed an impressive global scouting network headed by Steve Rowley. Through scouts such as Francis Cagigao (see Six of the Best: Scouts, page 54), Arsenal have been able to sign Fabregas, Spanish compatriot Fran Merida and other talents. But, critically, the network now extends beyond Europe.

Denilson, the Brazilian midfielder who made his debut for the Gunners this season, was prised away from Sao Paulo aged 18. Ivory Coast internationals Kolo Toure and Emmanuel Eboue arrived from the ASEC Abidjan academy in their homeland, while Vela was signed after excelling at the 2005 Under-17 World Championship in Peru, won by Mexico.

> **"Wenger's mantra is 'I don't look at a player's passport, only his talent'"**

Competition...Les Reed

The scouting network is an integral part of the club, according to Cagigao. "Arsenal may not seem that different to Real Madrid or Barca or Valencia, but behind the scenes, the philosophy changes," he says. "The scouts feel an important part of the club. We travel to all the important matches and tournaments. In total, some 80 people make up this department. Few clubs can equal the investment that we make in scouting."

### Paying dividends

The long-term approach is paying dividends, according to Cagigao, who sees crucial differences between the approach of English and Spanish clubs. "In the Premier League, there is more patience and common sense than in La Liga," he says. "The organisation of Spanish clubs is deficient because it is based on the results of the first team. It lacks patience and confidence."

For Wenger, the constant flow of talent from youth team to first team is proof positive of his approach. In an apparent dig at Chelsea, he said recently: "This is the work of five years and now to destroy what we have done by buying names would be crazy. To put a big name in front of players we have developed for years wouldn't make sense. I would say to the guy: 'Keep your £100million and invest it somewhere else.'"

Arsenal are by no means the only big club to have invested heavily in international scouting. Barcelona were able to sign Messi at 13 because the club agreed to fund a course of hormone therapy treatment for the youngster. The treatment process necessitated the wholesale transfer of Messi's family, with Barcelona also helping Messi's father, Jorge, find employment.

> **"Bayern have long been regular attenders of South American youth tournaments"**

Barcelona also have Mexican teenager Giovanni Dos Santos on their books. Alongside Vela, Dos Santos was the star of Mexico's Under-17 triumph in 2005. Though under 18 when he joined Barca, it was just before the new FIFA regulations banning the transfer of minors came into force.

Earlier this year, Barca tried to sign 13-year-old Turk Muhamed from Besiktas, but failed to reach agreement with the club about compensation.

Bayern Munich have long been regular attenders of South American youth tournaments, where they have spotted future signings such as Paraguayan Roque Santa Cruz and Peruvian Jose Guerrero.

Other clubs are now attempting to play catch-up. Last year Real Madrid, aware of Barcelona's Messi coup, hired former national team goalkeeper Julen Lopetegui to head a new international scouting division.

Chelsea's much-publicised recruitment of Dane Frank Arnesen from Tottenham as their director of football was a clear statement of intent from owner Roman Abramovich that his chequebook would not always be open for big-money transfers. Nigerian teenager John Obi Mikel is now a first-team regular after his controversial summer arrival from Norwegian club Lyn. Israeli youngster Ben Sahar is on the brink of the first-team squad, while Chelsea's academy now boasts talent from Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and Belgium.

In addition, Abramovich has been known to consult Dutch scout Piet De Visser on a regular basis. "He has been over to Holland a couple of times and is totally besotted with the youth academy at PSV," De Visser recently told Dutch magazine *Voetbal International*. "He has had a good look around. He has seen what he wanted to see. This is why he is now building a massive youth academy at Chelsea's training ground.

"I know why he is doing this. He is fed up that he keeps having to open his wallet and spend millions on new players. There comes a stage when you think it is pointless to spend so much, especially when it concerns players that Chelsea could develop within their own system or within their own youth academy.

### Private scout

"Mr Abramovich had to pay an absolute fortune to get players such as Didier Drogba and Michael Essien. This is why he has asked me as a private scout to look out for top-class young players who will be the Chelsea stars in three years' time.

"In the meantime, we have to bring them on board and make sure they can develop as footballers away from Chelsea, in a different surrounding. PSV and Chelsea both benefit from my work."

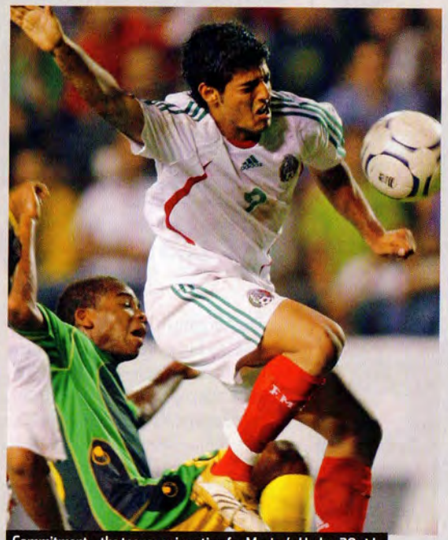
That is a veiled reference to Alex, the Brazilian defender whom Chelsea insist is not owned by them despite the assertion by PSV coach Ronald Koeman that Alex "is a Chelsea player and PSV rent him because he is still not allowed to play in England".

Another Brazilian, defender Alcides, who joined PSV from Benfica in January, was described by UEFA's website as being "owned by Chelsea" and on a "long-term loan" to PSV.

While the big European clubs have established extensive scouting

# The curious case of Carlos Vela

**ARSENAL used an unorthodox method to sign Carlos Vela, the star of Mexico's 2005 Under-17 World Championship triumph – agreeing verbally with Guadalajara to buy the player's rights for an undisclosed fee. According to different statements by the Mexican club's owner, Jorge Vergara, this fee ranged from £300,000 to £1.5million.**


Commitment...the teenager in action for Mexico's Under-20 side

**However, because Vela could not play in England because he could not obtain a work permit, Arsenal reached an agreement with Celta Vigo: the Spanish club offered a contract to the then 17-year-old and, to comply with FIFA rules on the transfer of under-18s, relocated his parents to Vigo. Officially, Vela moved for "non-footballing reasons". Vela's family home in Cancun had been damaged by a hurricane. It has since been completely rebuilt.**

**Celta then had the chance to use the player for one year. However, after the 2006-07 pre-season, the club felt Vela was too fragile for the first division and loaned him on to second division Salamanca, for whom he has been the best player of the season.**

### Released and loaned

**In the January transfer window, Vela, who turned 18 on March 1, was officially released by Celta and signed by Arsenal, who immediately loaned him to Salamanca until June 1. After that, the Gunners will try to get him a work permit to allow him to play in the English League. This is quite improbable as the teenager has not yet played for the Mexican national team, one of the pre-requisites to obtain a permit.**

**So, the probable outcome is for Vela to remain in Spain for another year, after which he will gain citizenship and, because of Spain's European Union membership, will be able to play in England without a work permit. Celta and Salamanca both want him on loan and have already talked to Arsenal about it.**

***Martin del Palacio Langer***

Big arrival...Vela (right) returns to Mexico with his team-mates after the 2005 Under-17 World Championship triumph in Peru

## SIX OF THE BEST: Scouts

Bigger stage...Park

### John PARK (Celtic)

Largely responsible for Scotland's best youth production line while at Hibernian, where, as chief scout and academy director, he identified and nurtured Scott Brown, Kevin Thompson, Derek Riordan and Garry O'Connor. The reputation of the former university IT manager spread, and he was courted by Frank Arnesen to become Chelsea's man in Scotland. Park refused, however, instead helping forge a link between the Blues and Hibs. Now he applies his talent-spotting skills on a bigger stage as football development manager at Celtic.

Much respected...Dremmler

### Wolfgang DREMMLER (Bayern Munich)

A member of West Germany's 1982 World Cup Final team, the former Bayern Munich player is now the club's much respected chief scout. Dremmler takes the credit for first spotting Owen Hargreaves. More recently he has succeeded in tapping a rich vein in South America, unearthing the talents of Paraguay forward Roque Santa Cruz, whom he first spotted at the 1997 Under-20 World Youth Cup, and Peru's Jose Guerrero, whom Dremmler brought over from Alianza Lima in 2002.

Wily...De Visser

### Piet DE VISSER (PSV & Chelsea)

Wily old Dutchman who brought Ronaldo to Europe. Enjoying a close relationship with Frank Arnesen, with whom he worked closely at PSV, he has become a vital cog in the relationship between Chelsea and the Eindhoven club, and now scouts for both. Even at 73, there is no sign of his skills waning, and he is said to have the ear of Roman Abramovich. The latest of De Visser's Brazilian prodigies, defender Alex, was the scourge of Arsenal in this season's Champions League and looks set fair for Stamford Bridge if Arnesen has his way.

### Gabriel RODRIGUEZ (River Plate)

Now director of the youth academy at River Plate, Rodriguez enjoys an unparalleled reputation in Argentina when it comes to unearthing future stars. Never a professional player, Rodriguez was on the coaching staff at River by the age of 21, and his unerring instincts helped him to spot and nurture such players as Hernan Crespo, Marcelo Gallardo, Javier Saviola and Andres D'Alessandro.

Frontiersman...Guillou

### Jean-Marc GUILLOU (Academie JMG)

A long-term ally of Arsene Wenger, the former French international has established himself as one of football's most intrepid frontiersmen. The architect of the renowned ASEC academy in Ivory Coast, whose graduates include Arsenal's Emmanuel Eboue and PSV's Aroune Kone, Guillou was, for a time, general manager of Belgian club Beveren, which he transformed into a European staging post for Ivorian talent, forging a tie-up with Arsenal. He has since sought to replicate his Ivorian success by establishing academies in Thailand and Madagascar.

### Francis CAGIGAO (Arsenal)

A former Arsenal youth team player in the 1980s, the Londoner with Spanish parents was poached as a teenager by Barcelona and played out his career in Spain. Appointed Arsenal's man on the Iberian peninsula, he played a crucial part in sending Cesc Fabregas in the other direction, plucking the midfielder from the obscurity of Barca's academy. Cagigao has since facilitated the capture of another young Spaniard, Fran Merida, tipped to follow Fabregas into the Arsenal midfield, and Portuguese starlet Rui Fonte.

*Dan Brennan*

networks, smaller clubs are relying on agents to provide information on promising young players. "Agents have vast networks around the world and also have partnership agreements to look for talent," Reed says. "That's the raw material they are hoping to move on and make money from. Agents are much more sophisticated than the clubs in terms of identifying young talent. They do the work for the clubs and then recommend players to clubs in return for some financial deal down the line."

In the case of Messi, Barcelona paid an "introductory fee" to his agents once he appeared in the first-team squad.

Clubs scouting at major international youth tournaments must face up to the prospect that much of the top talent gets snapped up before they appear on the world stage. By the time Messi had starred at the Under-20 World Youth Cup in Holland in 2005, he was already well established at Barca.

**Twin talents**

Fabio and Rafael, the Brazilian twins who starred at the recent South American Under-17 Championship in Ecuador (see Six of the Best, opposite), have been tracked by Manchester United since they appeared in a South American Under-15 event.

In addition to the scouting networks, clubs are also developing more formal arrangements for securing talent. "Everybody is looking at ways to recruit talent if they spot it," Reed says. "Basically, there are two ways a club can do that. They can set themselves up abroad, running coaching clinics and soccer schools in an effort to develop a relationship with overseas clubs. The hope is that the local players will develop an affiliation with the foreign club. With Charlton, they were really just extensions of our Football in the Community scheme in England – working at grassroots level, teaching lessons and advising. The recruitment of elite youngsters comes as a consequence of developing community links.

"Then there is the more sophisticated development of relationships with clubs abroad so that it is almost like a farm club situation, where players stay until they are eligible to come over and play in England."

Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United have had close relations with Belgian clubs Beveren, Westerlo and Antwerp respectively.

The Gunners have denied allegations made by the BBC *Newsnight* programme that they had direct financial links with Beveren.

The Abidjan academy that produced Toure and Eboue at one stage also provided Beveren's entire first team. The Belgian club have since severed their links with the academy, and now Charlton have stepped in to develop a relationship.

Elsewhere in Africa, Ajax Cape Town have produced Steven Pienaar and Stanton Lewis for their parent club in Amsterdam. The South African academy run by FC Copenhagen has produced Elrio Van Heerden and Bongumusa Mthethwa for the Danish side. Auxerre's strong links with the Congolese federation's academy has supplied Francel Ibarra.

Lokeren, another Belgian club, have been active in several African countries. Their Satellite academy in Guinea produced Aboubacar Mbaye and Mamadou Diallo.

The future of Feyenoord's Fetteh academy in Ghana is in doubt as Jorien Van den Herik, the man who established the academy, is no longer club president. But two academy graduates are already first-teamers in Europe: Mohammed Abubakari at Feyenoord and Nana Asare at Mechelen of Belgium. In addition, eight players from the academy are playing in Ghana's Olympic team. Van den Herik has claimed that Asare has had a successful trial at Manchester United and that "he might go across the Channel soon".

As for English clubs parking players, the attraction of other European Union countries becomes obvious when the UK's strict employment laws are examined. In order to obtain a work permit, foreign players are required to have played in 75 per cent of their national team's matches over the previous two years. However, this requirement is waived if they have obtained a work permit in another EU country. Belgium, for instance, has long been a popular country for parking players. Meanwhile, Vela's move on loan to Salamanca could herald the regular use of the Spanish second division side by Arsenal as a stepping stone for the import of Latin American players.

With all aspects of youth development, domestic or international, there is no guarantee that a teenage protege will develop into a professional player. But by casting their nets as wide as possible, clubs are increasing their chances of unearthing the next big thing. And they are all too aware that if they do not do it, another club will. ●

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## SIX OF THE BEST: Stars of South America's Under-17 Championship

### Cristian GAITAN

Estudiantes & Argentina; 15.01.90
Wide midfielder reminiscent of compatriot Kily Gonzalez, though right-footed. Full of thrust, fire and skill on the right flank, he set up a steady stream of chances for Argentina with his service into the box.

### FABIO

Fluminense & Brazil; 09.07.90
Captained Brazil to win the championship from left-back, though he is naturally right-footed. The range of his talent stands comparison with Argentina's Juan Pablo Sorin: he can hit the byline or cut inside, finishes well and is excellent in the air, especially in attack. Tournament second top scorer with seven goals. Set to join Man Utd with twin Rafael, also impressive at right-back.

### LULA

Corinthians & Brazil; 10.04.90
Attacking midfielder who could not stop scoring, notching 12 goals in all to become not only the tournament top scorer, but also the leading marksman in the event's history. Admires Kaka, and though he lacks the physical presence of the Milan star, his positional play and finishing look worthy of comparison. Gave a master class in coolly clipping the ball into the corner of the net.

### BERNARDO

Cruzeiro & Brazil; 20.05.90
Barrel-chested attacking midfielder who was the supply line for many of his country's goals. Strong in possession, excellent at slipping passes behind the defensive line and a source of danger from set-pieces. With more calmness in front of goal he would have scored more than twice.

### Cristian NAZARITH

America Cali & Colombia; 13.08.90
Third top scorer in the tournament with six goals. Well-built centre-forward with a prodigious leap, which made him especially dangerous in the air. At times he was left on his own up front, but Nazarith also showed that he could work with a partner. Still needs to borrow money from his mother to get the bus to training. More comfortable times are surely around the corner.

### Reimond MANCO

Alianza Lima & Peru; 23.08.90
Wiry, very skilful striker who was the star of the first group phase. Failed to add to his two goals in the final group, and the burdens of carrying the side to qualification clearly put a strain on his temperament. Lived in Venezuela between the ages of two and eight, and 13 to 15, and represented that country two years ago in the South American Under-15 Championship.

*Tim Vickery*

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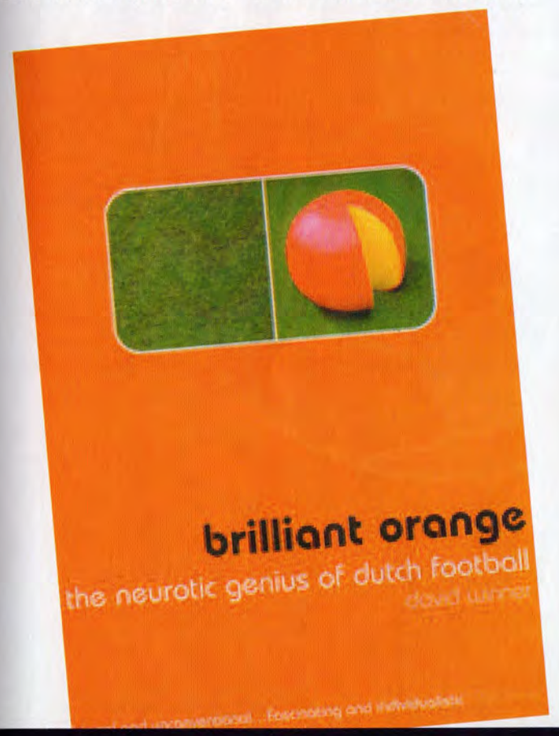


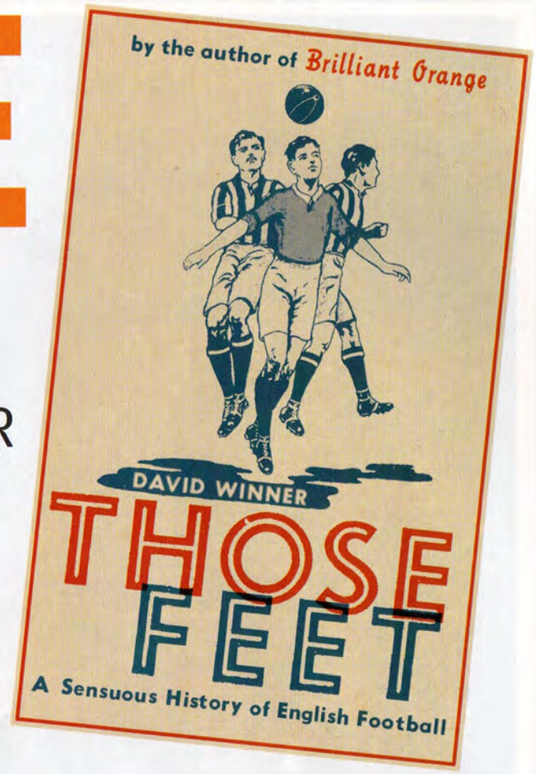


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# RENATO AUGUSTO

BRAZIL

## Flamengo fan now doing the business on the pitch

FLAMENGO'S recent turnaround in fortunes – relegation candidates to Libertadores Cup qualifiers – has come under the calm, thoughtful leadership of coach Ney Franco, and the most eye-catching player is attacking midfielder Renato Augusto.

The 19-year-old is a right-footed version of the young Rivaldo; similar build and rather ungainly gait, as if he were wading through water, impressive strength on the ball and powerful thrust. He also shares some of Rivaldo's defects such as a tendency to play with his head down and a decided weakness in his "other" foot (in his case, the left).

Augusto, who came up through the ranks at Flamengo, takes any criticism in his stride. "The only people who never get it wrong are those who never try," he says. "I was a [Flamengo] supporter, I yelled all sorts of things at the players and so I understand."

Last year as Flamengo made progress in the Brazilian Cup, he followed their fortunes from his usual spot in the stands of the Maracana. When they reached the Final, against local rivals Vasco da Gama, he rushed out to buy tickets. Then, to his astonishment, Franco threw him into the team, claiming that "within two years Renato Augusto will be one of the best players in Brazil".

The gamble paid off. Flamengo won the trophy and as they built a side for 2007, including the Libertadores campaign for which the cup triumph qualified them, Augusto was a big part of their plans.

His natural position would seem to be at the head of the diamond, deep enough to pick up the ball played to feet, far enough forward to threaten a shot, and with the liberty to surge down either flank. More good performances in the Libertadores – and the World Youth Cup in Canada in July, if selected – will surely put Augusto in the shop window.

Flamengo director Kleber Leite says "clubs from all over the world" have been enquiring about the new sensation. "The last were Inter Milan, but we didn't even listen to the offer."

*Tim Vickery*

### FACT FILE

**Club** Flamengo
**Country** Brazil
**Born** February 1, 1988, in Rio de Janeiro
**Honours** South American Under-17 Championship 2005; Brazilian Cup 2006

# Bojan KRKIC

SPAIN

## Barca's next jewel in the crown?

BARCELONA'S youth academy has produced some excellent players, but 16-year-old centre-forward Bojan Krkic could be the best of the lot.

The son of a former Serbian international of the same name, he was born in Spain after his father moved from Red Star Belgrade to Spanish second division side Mollerussa. The Barcelona connection was forged when Krkic senior became a scout for the club.

The young striker has scored more than 500 goals for Barca's youth sides – an astonishing average of 3.5 per match – and in just two years has jumped from the under-14 team to Barcelona B, who play in the second division.

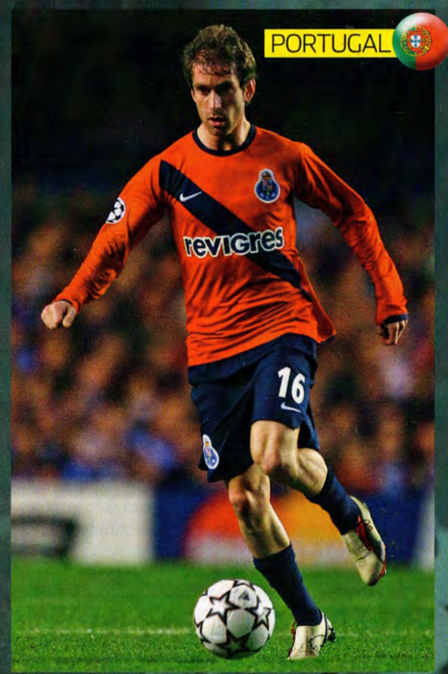
Krkic is reminiscent of first-team prodigy Lionel Messi – he is small, fast and technically impressive. But Krkic is an out-and-out striker. Club director Albert Perrin has rebuffed the demands of some Barca fans for Krkic to be promoted soon to the first-team squad, saying: "He's only 16. He will definitely play with the first team, but not next year."

However, a good display in the Under-17 World Championship in South Korea in August could propel Krkic on to the big stage sooner than expected – just as happened with Messi in 2005 after his starring role at the Under-20 World Youth Cup.

*Martin del Palacio Langer*

### FACT FILE

**Club** Barcelona B
**Country** Spain
**Born** August 28, 1990, in Lleida



PORTUGAL

# RAUL MEIRELES

## Porto's all-action midfielder

ARGENTINIAN midfielder Lucho Gonzalez has been outstanding for FC Porto this season, but Raul Meireles has also been hugely influential, so much so that the Portuguese champions' engine room never runs as smoothly without him. Meireles offers great versatility – he can play as anchor man or on the left side of midfield – and his dynamism and enthusiasm suggests he could well develop into a Bryan Robson-type figure. He is a gritty tackler, covers well, passes with vision and accuracy, pushes forward effectively and has a powerful shot. The latter facet of his game was underlined by his goal in Porto's 1-1 draw at home to Chelsea in the first knockout round of the Champions League.

Meireles came through the youth ranks at Boavista then joined the big boys in 2004 on a five-year contract.

There was no surprise when Luiz Felipe Scolari gave him his first senior cap in Portugal's Euro 2008 qualifier against Kazakhstan last November.

*Nick Bidwell*

### FACT FILE

**Club** FC Porto
**Country** Portugal
**Born** March 17, 1983, in Porto
**Previous clubs** Boavista, Aves
**International debut** November 2006, v Kazakhstan
**International caps** 1 (0 goals)
**Honours** European Under-16 Championship 2000; Portuguese League 2006

The country in depth – the state of the game, club-by-club guide, movers and shakers

# Trouble in gangland

## The Argentinian game is blighted by hooliganism, poor infrastructure and the constant sale of talented players to Europe

EVERY FOUR YEARS, at least since 1986, when Argentina won their second World Cup, there is collective grief here when the team are knocked out of the finals because the fans expect them to win the trophy every time. Yet when Argentina took top spot in the FIFA rankings for the first time this March, nobody took it seriously. True, Argentina had beaten France 1-0 away in their most recent game, in February, but it was only a friendly and their first match since October.

Yet once again hopes are high because of the appointment of Alfio Basile for a second spell as national coach last September. In his first stint, from 1991 to 1994, Argentina won the Copa America twice and enjoyed a 31-match unbeaten run. The team failed to win the 1994 World Cup, however, going to pieces in the second round after Diego Maradona's drug suspension.

This time round, Basile has sought to strengthen his hand by forming a squad of home-based players, whom he coaches every Monday and Tuesday, since all the first-team regulars are with European clubs. Some of these "B team" players may make it into the squad for the Copa America, which starts in late June. But, ironically, by then many of the home-based squad may also have signed up for European clubs.

This exodus of players is an ongoing problem for the domestic game since it has lowered the standard of the national championship. Another contributory factor to this is that, since 1991, the league season has comprised two championships – the opening and closing. This, of course, creates two close seasons, in both of which clubs tend to make wholesale team changes which makes it difficult to build a strong side.

> "Nearly every top-flight club is in the red because of bad management or corruption"

### Sale or return

Apart from players being transferred abroad – which has become very lucrative since the steep devaluation of the peso in 2001 – more and more players are loaned out or return to their original club after every tournament. Many other player contracts are owned by investors, agents and even club directors, who move them from club to club to make a profit.

The tax authorities have requested clubs to send them details of player contract ownership and also full accounts of transfers, but there has been little compliance.

The declining standard of club football has been shown by the performance of Argentinian sides in continental tournaments in recent years. For example, they used to dominate the Libertadores Cup, but Brazilian sides are now in the ascendancy, and Argentina's representatives often struggle. This is partly the fault of the FA's odd qualifying rules. For instance, Estudiantes de La Plata won this season's opening championship in December but instead of entering this year's Libertadores, they will go into the 2008 edition, by which time their team will have changed and they may no longer be the best representatives.

This is not the FA's only shortcoming. Just look at the method for deciding relegation. In 1983, a new system was introduced under which the teams with the lowest average points over the previous three seasons went down. It might have had its merits, but it was brought in for the wrong reasons. That year, River Plate would have been relegated under the old system.

The current system saves big clubs from going down after one poor season, but it is hard on newly promoted clubs, who do not have the benefit of having three seasons to improve their average and therefore have to finish in mid-table or thereabouts to avoid going straight down again. This season, with 10 games to go, the three promoted clubs were all in the bottom four in the averages table (two go down automatically, the other two into relegation/promotion play-offs).

The Argentinian game has been polarised since it became professional in 1931. River Plate and Boca Juniors have won half the titles between them (32 and 22 respectively), with Independiente, Racing Club and San Lorenzo regarded as the country's other big clubs, a rung below the top two.

The FA's favouritism for this quintet is subtle. Players from smaller clubs are more likely to be sent off and receive longer bans, while one referee, who did not wish to be named, told me: "We are warned not to make mistakes against the big clubs as well as Arsenal [the club of long-time FA president Julio Grondona] and Lanus [that of Jorge Romo, the head of the referees committee]."

Also, punishments for crowd trouble at home games always seem to be harsher for the smaller clubs.

As for the stadiums, they are mostly old and decrepit by European standards. Not a single one would be acceptable as a World Cup finals venue and none is all-seater. Tickets for big games at Boca Juniors' stadium are almost impossible to get. The Bombonera holds some 55,000, but the club, the most popular in the country, have over 50,000 members, who can get in free.

Nor is there the money to erect new stadiums. Independiente are building one, but it will be smaller than their old stadium – a bad move for a big club.

Nearly every top-division club is in the red because of bad management or corruption or both. River Plate's financial plight is remarkable – they have sold numerous players for high fees in recent years, yet they have over 50 professionals on their books, some of whom never see first-team action. Some clubs are bankrupt, but no court would ever dream of closing down a football club here.





ERIC WEIL in Buenos Aires

Fighting forces...fans of Banfield and Independiente slug it out during a league game

But perhaps the biggest problem affecting Argentinian football is hooliganism, with regular violent disturbances and over 180 soccer-related deaths since the start of the professional game in 1931. Hooligan gangs have formed at each club, who effectively support them by giving members free match tickets (which they sell on for profit), transport to away games and even cash. This financial encouragement may stem from fear of reprisals, but clubs also have been known to use the intimidating gang members to threaten unwanted coaches and players so they leave without asking for compensation.

Clubs sometimes also pay for lawyers to defend their hooligan gang members when charged with criminal offences, and as a consequence few have been convicted. This year, Rafael Di Zeo, the infamous leader of the Boca Juniors gang, was finally sent to jail for a weapons-related offence committed in 1999. But for years he has managed to stay free, evading imprisonment as his lawyers exploit loopholes.

### Lenient authorities

The police and courts stand accused of being too lenient with the hooligans, and even now, with several sports security committees in place, measures to banish the thugs are just not being imposed. Javier Castrilli, a former strict referee, is head of a government committee supposedly fighting hooliganism. He orders stadium closures, imposes away-fan bans and changes kick-off times for games to avoid potential clashes between rival supporters; he has also ordered the FA to deduct points from clubs that have had hooligan incidents at home matches. All these measures make a mess of the championship and antagonise true fans. But, more importantly, they do not really do anything to put an end to hooliganism.

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# Belgrano, Boca, Quilmes...a guide to the top-division teams

## 1 GIMNASIA Y ESGRIMA DE JUJUY
Northern club who have struggled to establish themselves in the top division, but now seem to have settled in as a mid-table outfit.

## 2 BELGRANO
One of the three big clubs from Cordoba, Argentina's second biggest city, but the only one currently in the top division and they are in the relegation zone.

## 3 GODOY CRUZ
The Mendoza province club are in the top division for the first time this season but don't look like staying up.

## 4 COLON SANTA FE
A modest top-division side who are overshadowed by the other two sides from Santa Fe province, Rosario Central and Newell's Old Boys. Until recently Colon were the only top-level club not in the red, but flood damage at their stadium has hit them financially.

## 5 ROSARIO CENTRAL
One of the few successful provincial clubs, having won four titles, taking advantage of the fact that the city of Rosario and the province of Santa Fe in general produce many good players. But the club have found it difficult to hang on to their good players.

## 6 NEWELL'S OLD BOYS
Rosario's other big club are the winners of five titles having also benefited from the wealth of talent in Santa Fe province. Newell's had also done well financially out of the sale of players, but have just been declared bankrupt because of poor management.

## 7 BOCA JUNIORS
Argentina's most popular club and most successful in recent years, having won a number of domestic titles and the Libertadores Cup three times since 2000. Boca's roots are in Buenos Aires' Italian community.

## 8 RIVER PLATE
The country's second-best supported club and have won most domestic titles overall – 32 against Boca's 22. But River continually sell their best players to Europe, stopping them from becoming a really great team. Although they receive big transfer fees, the club are in the red because of poor administration.

## 9 LANUS
An established top-division club from the south of Buenos Aires but they find it difficult to hang on to their good players and have never won a title.

## 10 VELEZ SARSFIELD
A big, generally well-run club and one of the few in Argentina to rely mainly on home-grown players. Raul Gamez, the former Velez hooligan gang member who recently stepped down as club president, is a strong candidate for the FA presidency.

## 11 SAN LORENZO
One of the biggest top-division clubs and are in the running to win the closing championship despite their financial problems. San Lorenzo have their roots in Buenos Aires' Spanish community.

## 12 NUEVA CHICAGO
Yo-yo club who seem destined for another relegation. The team always have plenty of fight but lack skill, and limited finances mean they cannot buy in talent.

## 13 ARGENTINOS JUNIORS
Could have been one of the strongest teams in the country over the years if they had not continually sold their best players. Departees include Diego Maradona, Roberto Ayala and Juan Roman Riquelme.

## 14 BANFIELD
Small club from the south of Buenos Aires who have come close to winning a title but have slipped back to mediocrity after selling off their best players.

## 15 QUILMES
Look certain to be relegated after suffering serious team instability under no fewer than five coaches in a year. Quilmes have won the title once, in 1978.

## 16 INDEPENDIENTE
Have won the Libertadores Cup a record seven times and have the third highest domestic title tally, 14. However, they have not been very successful lately, mostly because of bad administration and a failure to find adequate replacements for sold stars.

## 17 ARSENAL
The youngest top-flight club, having been founded only in 1957 by current FA president Julio Grondona. Entered the top division in the 2002-03 season, under the presidency of Grondona's son, Julio.

## 18 RACING CLUB
Big club but currently in administration and recently sacked coach Reinaldo Merlo after a run of poor results. Supported by many political leaders, including current state president Nestor Kirchner, former dictator Juan Peron and General Leopoldo Galtieri, who ordered the Falklands invasion in 1982.

## 19 ESTUDIANTES DE LA PLATA
Won the opening championship after re-signing Juan Veron and have continued to do well in the closing campaign, with few team changes. Estudiantes have won four domestic titles and three Libertadores Cups.

## 20 GIMNASIA Y ESGRIMA DE LA PLATA
The oldest club in the top division, having been founded in 1887, but have never won the title. Finished runners-up no fewer than five times between 1995 and 2005, but have slipped recently after some poor transfer deals. Colombian Francisco Maturana recently replaced Pedro Troglio as coach.





# The movers and shakers in Argentinian football

**● JAVIER CASTRILLI**
Former referee in charge of the government's soccer security committee. He was unpopular with fans during his refereeing days because of his strictness and is hardly flavour of the month in his current role, having ordered stadium closures, match postponements and late switches of venue and kick-off time to avoid potential clashes between supporters.

**● RAUL GAMEZ**
The Velez Sarsfield vice-president is Julio Grondona's fiercest critic and could present the first serious challenge to him when he stands in the next FA presidential election. Gamez, who stepped down as Velez president last year, is a former member of the club's hooligan gang and has admitted supplying current gang members with free match tickets.

**● JULIO GRONDONA**
FA president since 1979 and there are frequent complaints that he rules like a dictator. Although he continually stresses the FA's democratic set-up, nothing – not even the designation of referees – seems to be done without his agreement. The 75-year-old, who has been unopposed when standing for re-election, is also a FIFA vice-president. Grondona founded the Arsenal club in 1957 and was later president of Independiente.

**● JUAN ROMAN RIQUELME**
Suffered the fate of Juan Veron in being unjustly blamed for a World Cup elimination, in his case 2006, but has become the darling of domestic football once again since rejoining Boca Juniors on loan from Villarreal. The big questions now are: Will he stay on at Boca (the club do not have the money to buy him, but it has been reported he has sold his house in Spain)? And, will he return to the national team having withdrawn last year because the media criticism had caused his mother too much distress?

**● JUAN SEBASTIAN VERON**
Returned to his first club, Estudiantes de La Plata, last year from European football and inspired them to win the opening championship. Was unjustly blamed by fans and media for Argentina's shock group-stage exit at the 2002 World Cup and dropped out of the national team picture. Has now been included in Alfio Basile's national squad of home-based players, of which he is considered the leader.

**● RAFAEL DI ZEO**
The Boca Juniors gang leader is Argentina's best-known hooligan and the idol of other gangs, who have attempted to tap into his "expertise". Currently serving a 51-month jail sentence for a weapons-related crime at a match in 1999. Boasts of having political, judicial and police connections.

**● MAURICIO MACRI**
President of Boca Juniors since 1995. His good administration has helped to make the club more successful than ever. Influential in football circles, but is not interested in standing for FA president. Instead, he has gone into politics, winning a seat in Congress.

**● ALFIO BASILE**
Well-liked, hard-working national coach who took the job for a second time last September after leading Boca Juniors to a number of trophies. The former Racing Club player was previously in charge of Argentina from 1991 to 1994.

## BACKGROUND BRIEFING

League highlight...Boca v River

● The league season, which runs from August to June, comprises two championships – the opening and closing – in each of which the 20 top-division clubs play each other once. Unlike in most other South American countries, the title winners do not play off to determine the overall champions.

● The title winners and the other clubs with most aggregate points over the season enter continental competition – the Sudamericana Cup, the equivalent of the UEFA Cup, is played during the opening championship; and the Libertadores Cup, South America's premier club tournament, played during the closing championship.

● Relegation is decided on average points gained over the most recent three seasons. The bottom two go down automatically, the two clubs above them go into relegation/promotion play-offs.

● Argentina does not have a national cup competition.

Ticker-tape reception...the fans create a spectacular welcome for the hosts in the Final at the Monumental

# Tainted title

## Brian Glanville remembers a tournament overshadowed by political machinations and allegations of cheating

IN MEXICO IN 1986, Diego Maradona's Hand of God helped Argentina to win their second World Cup. When they won their first, in 1978 on home soil, cheating was more surreptitious but unquestionably present. The words of the late Claudio Coutinho, Brazil's frustrated coach, ring down the years. "The Peruvians will not feel proud when they hear their national anthem at the next World Cup."

In the last match of the second group stage of the finals, Argentina annihilated a strangely passive Peru 6-0 to reach the Final on goal difference at the expense of Brazil, who had been obliged to play their last game earlier in the day.

It was an ill-augured tournament from the outset. Argentina was under the brutal dominance of a military junta, led by General Jorge Videla, which was opposed with almost equal ruthlessness by the Montoneros guerrillas. Opponents of the regime were tortured, thousands were murdered or "disappeared". Another general, Omar Actis, placed by the junta as head of the World Cup organising committee, was assassinated en route to his first press conference.

The tournament itself appeared at risk. Even the economics minister protested at the vast cost. Losses of £400million were expected. There was strong international opposition to the finals, some of it crudely ill-conceived, playing into the cynical hands of the junta, which could represent it as being anti-Argentinian. An example of this was given in England by the National Union of Journalists, which published an inept little handbook for journalists covering the competition, with such fatuous Spanish phrases as "stop torturing me" sure to be of service.

In Buenos Aires, the sad, slow circular March of the Mothers outside the presidential palace mourned and protested the disappearance of their sons.

The Argentina team had a genial, chain-smoking coach in Cesar Luis Menotti, alias The Thin One, who publicly eschewed the appallingly violent methods of Argentinian clubs and the national team in previous years. They would get his side nowhere, he insisted.

### Maradona omitted

The precocious 17-year-old Maradona was a protege of Menotti but, surprisingly, he was omitted from the squad. His place at inside-left went to prolific striker Mario Kempes, who in the past four years had matured into a major force in Spain.

Argentina's opening two games, against Hungary and France at River Plate's Monumental stadium, were contentiously refereed, the first by the feeble Portuguese Antonio Garrido.

The Hungarians were an abrasive team but in Andras Torocsik and Tibor Nyilasi they had a splendid spearhead. Hungary went ahead in 12 minutes; Argentina equalised three minutes later through Leopoldo Luque, and as Menotti had promised, they were committed to attack, Kempes and Luque a formidable combination. Daniel Bertoni would score the winner after Hungarian keeper Sandor Gujdar had brought Luque down.

Torocsik, hugely adroit, was constantly fouled with scant protection, and at last, when fouled by Americo Gallego, something snapped and he kicked Gallego to the ground. Torocsik was expelled, as would be Nyilasi for a gratuitous foul on left-back Alberto Tarantini. Two-one to Argentina but it was a tainted win.

Still more so was the 2-1 success against an ebullient French team, scandalously treated by inept Swiss referee Jean Dubach. Michel Platini sparkled, but in first-half injury-time Argentina went ahead through a monstrous penalty. When the accomplished centre-back-sweeper Marius Tresor fell on the ball with his hand, challenging Luque, Dubach, well behind the play, ran to consult a linesman with a still less plain view, asking him of all things: "Inside or outside?" Daniel Passarella, Argentina's captain and abrasive centre-back, converted the penalty.

Platini equalised on the hour, Didier Six missed a fine chance to put France ahead, Luque hit a fierce right-footed winner.

In *Time* magazine, I was strongly critical of the biased refereeing, which caused bitter offence in Buenos Aires. Writing in *La Nazione* of Florence, Raffaello Paloscia said: "Brian Glanville, the most hated journalist in football, is running true to form in Argentina...But the events in the Argentina-France game proved he was right."

> **"The tournament appeared at risk. Even the economics minister protested at the vast cost. Losses of £400million were expected. There was international opposition"**

The whole country, in fact, was consumed by nationalistic passion. Colossal exultant crowds thronged the streets and squares of

Captain's Cup...Passarella is chaired by team-mates as he grasps the trophy

Buenos Aires after each success. A leading local journalist I'd known for years refused to speak to me.

Italy beat Argentina impressively in the final first group stage game, also at the Monumental. Forwards Roberto Bettega, who scored the only goal, and new revelation Paolo Rossi were in splendid form. But both teams qualified for the next round.

So did a somewhat disappointing Holland, deprived of the irreplaceable Johan Cruyff, supposedly "gated" by his wife after frolics in a hotel swimming pool during the 1974 finals in West Germany. Nor would Wim Van Hanegem, the excellent creative left-footer, play.

The Dutch began drably and qualified from their group only by the skin of their teeth, beaten 3-2 by a previously poor Scotland team in the final game, Archie Gemmill scoring a glorious slalom of a goal.

Brazil were strangely mediocre. Coach Coutinho was at odds with Zico, Rivelino looked overweight. In Mar del Plata on a churned up pitch, they'd have beaten Sweden in their opening game but for Welsh referee Clive Thomas blowing for full-time when the ball was still in the air from a corner, which Zico headed in.

Brazil also failed to beat Spain, drawing 0-0. A lucky 1-0 win over Austria enabled them to qualify.

Win and a draw... Menotti, the chain-smoking coach

### Kempes double

In the second group Argentina would play in Rosario and Mendoza. They beat Poland 2-0 in the first game, Kempes the scorer of both goals. Argentina were then held 0-0 by Brazil, who'd thrashed Peru 3-0 in their first game, little Dirceu hitting two long-range left-footed goals.

A French critic wrote that both Brazil and Argentina "were the prisoners of their fears". Brazil's Batista was ruthlessly fouled by Luque (who was otherwise much subdued after injury and the death of his brother in a blazing car accident) in the first half, Ricky Villa in the second.

So Brazil held a one-goal advantage going into the final round of games, in which they accounted for Poland 3-1, but because it had ineptly been scheduled to take place several hours before Argentina played, the hosts knew how many goals they had to beat Peru by. Argentina proceeded to sail home against opponents who fell apart having begun well, winger Juan Munante hitting the post. Peru keeper Ramon Quiroga, actually born in Rosario, wrote an open letter pleading innocence, but few believed him.

So, in the Final, Argentina would meet Holland, winners of the other group. The Dutch had gone behind against Italy in their final match to an own goal by centre-back Ernie Brandts. But he atoned by equalising with a long-range shot, and Arie Haan hit the winner, a tremendous drive.

> **"The Final was a torrid, ill-tempered affair, abysmally refereed by Italian Sergio Gonella, but thrilling and dramatic for all that"**

Holland had thrashed a flaccid Austria 5-1 in their first game, then drew 2-2 with West Germany, deprived of Franz Beckenbauer, who preferred to play for New York Cosmos.

The Final was a torrid, ill-tempered affair, abysmally refereed by Italian Sergio Gonella, but thrilling and dramatic for all that. The Argentinians set the contentious tone by keeping the Dutch waiting before deigning to emerge, then making a cynical protest about the light wrist bandage left-winger Rene Van de Kerkhof was wearing. Much provoked, the Dutch would commit more than 50 fouls.

Holland, coached by former Austrian international Ernst Happel, four times allowed Passarella to steal upfield, unmarked. Jan Jongbloed saved three efforts, one whizzed over the bar. But Ruud Krol, sweeper and captain, was still a major force. Twice, Gallego handled the ball without being booked. Argentina keeper Ubaldo Fillol, keeping his best form for the Final, made two fine first-half saves. Seven minutes from half-time, Kempes, in explosive form, forced his way past Haan to put Argentina ahead.

Fillol continued to defy the Dutch after the break. Holland brought on tall forward Dirk Nanninga and moved the tall Brandts up beside him. Nanninga duly headed the equaliser from Van de Kerkhof's cross, and in the dramatic last moments of normal time, Passarella elbowed Johan Neeskens in the face and Rob Rensenbrink hit a post.

Argentina had been flagging and it was logical to expect them to wane in extra-time. Instead, who knows how or why, they found new life, and Kempes, never adequately marked by Willy Van de Kerkhof, was irresistible. On 104 minutes, he thundered through the Dutch defence again and just got the better of Jongbloed, making it 2-1. In the second period, after another of his splendid solos, he put Bertoni through for a third.

Overall, Argentina's was a tainted victory, but Kempes had been a hero. Buenos Aires went wild with joy, an ant-heap pullulating with ecstatic fans. But the junta was doomed. ●

Final hero...Kempes scores against Holland

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES
### Menotti was key to the triumph

# AUGUST 1978

PRACTICALLY all of Argentina's great teams of the past have come about by accident. One of the most recent examples was the 1966 World Cup team, which went out 1-0 to eventual champions England in the quarter-finals. They had been performing so badly at home that there was talk of not sending them to England, but 10 days before their departure, they suddenly clicked...and, who knows, they might even have won the trophy if centre-half Antonio Rattin, the team's inspiration and leader, had not been sent off against England.

The team that has just won the World Cup, however, was certainly no accident. It lacked a leader of Rattin's stature, but it was good enough to win a World Cup in which there were no outstanding teams.

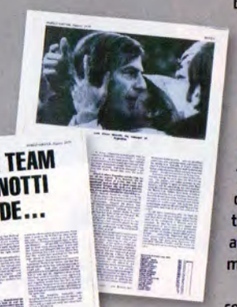
For the first time, a coach, Cesar Luis Menotti, had been put in charge of Argentina's preparations shortly after the previous World Cup finals. Whether the team he built had won the Cup or not, to him must go the credit of giving Argentinian soccer a new image, of clean play and attacking style.

Menotti tried out well over 100 players to find those that best fitted into his style, which was alien to most of them because it had little to do with the often rough, defensive, counter-attacking tactics of most clubs. This made it doubly difficult to instill an attacking mentality.

Menotti was continually criticised by the press and other coaches, who thought that his clean, attacking soccer would get nowhere in the World Cup; nor, they believed, did he have the players for it.

Tactics apart, the most important reason for Argentina's World Cup victory was that they played soccer all the way without resorting to rough play...even when provoked by the opposition. Not so long ago, Argentina would have been quick to retaliate to any aggression. The game would have gone to the wind and the team would have lost their effectiveness, because most of their players do not possess the physique nor the mentality to play it rough and retain a chance of winning.

This was discipline, Menotti's calm discipline, which was never easy to impose on the characteristically hot-headed Latins...and this is why a coach can rarely have done more to win a World Cup.



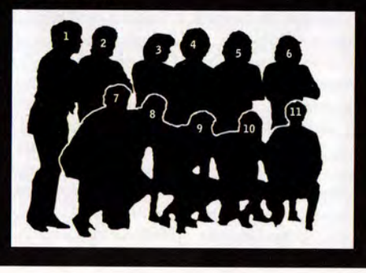
from ERIC WEIL
THE TEAM MENOTTI MADE...

## NEXT STEPS
### What happened to Argentina's 1978 World Cup-winning side

Ready for action...the Final starting line-up

KEY

1 Daniel PASSARELLA
2 Daniel BERTONI
3 Jorge OLGUIN
4 Alberto TARANTINI
5 Mario KEMPES
6 Ubaldo FILLOL
7 Americo GALLEGO
8 Osvaldo ARDILES
9 Leopoldo LUQUE
10 Oscar ORTIZ
11 Luis GALVAN




**1** Daniel PASSARELLA, centre-back and captain
Moved into coaching after retiring as a player in 1989. Won a number of titles with River Plate then guided Argentina to France 98. Had unsuccessful spells with Uruguay, Parma and Corinthians. Returned to coach River Plate last year.

**2** Daniel BERTONI, midfielder
Moved to Sevilla after the finals and then Italy. Went on to coach Independiente. Now a scout for European clubs and an occasional TV pundit.

**3** Jorge OLGUIN, right-back
Signed for Independiente after the finals, then moved into coaching, with clubs in Argentina, Japan and Costa Rica.

**4** Alberto TARANTINI, left-back
*El Conejo* (the rabbit) joined Birmingham after the World Cup, but his stay was brief because of poor discipline. Had a more successful spell with Toulouse. Now back home, running a car-wash business.

**5** Mario KEMPES, forward
*El Matador* finally ended his playing career in 1996 with Indonesian club Pelita Jaya. Coached Bolivar to the Bolivian title in 1999. Now living in New York and working as a pundit for ESPN Deportes.

**6** Ubaldo FILLOL, goalkeeper
*El Pato* (the duck) went on to play for Atletico Madrid and in Brazil for Flamengo, ending his career back home with Velez Sarsfield. Now goalkeeping coach of the national side.

**7** Americo GALLEGO, midfielder
Stayed in Argentina with Newell's Old Boys, then joined River Plate. Now a successful coach, having won the league title with River, Newell's and Independiente, and the Mexican title with current club Toluca.

**8** Osvaldo ARDILES, midfielder
Famously joined Tottenham with Ricky Villa, another squad member, after the finals. Then had a season at Paris Saint-Germain before going into coaching, with Swindon, Newcastle, West Brom and Spurs. Has since worked in Mexico, Japan, Croatia, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Fired by Beitar Jerusalem last year.

**9** Leopoldo LUQUE, forward
Retired in 1984. Today, he is sports secretary of Mendoza province.

**10** Oscar ORTIZ, midfielder
Retired as a player in 1983. Now runs a soccer school in Buenos Aires.

**11** Luis GALVAN, central defender
Spent most of his career at Talleres Cordoba, finally retiring in 1989 aged 39. Now runs a soccer school in Cordoba.

ALSO...
Ricky VILLA, midfielder
Retired in 1989. Now a director of Talleres Cordoba.

# UEFA's eastern gamble

## The Euro 2012 decision marks a shift in Europe's balance of power

Surprise package...Michel Platini reveals the winners of the Euro 2012 hosting rights

UKRAINIAN FEDERATION president Hryhorii Surkis had it about right when he greeted UEFA's approval of the Poland/Ukraine bid for Euro 2012 with the words: "We have been given five years in which to build entirely new countries."

The European body has taken a calculated gamble in backing the P/U option – ahead of the bids from Italy and Croatia/Hungary – relying on political will to force through the infrastructural development that will showcase both countries to the world.

But as the members of the Polish and Ukrainian delegations shouted, whooped and cheered in surprise and delight as UEFA president Michel Platini made the announcement in Cardiff, the humiliation of Italian football was almost overlooked.

The Italians had been cocksure, certain the rights were in the bag. And to compound their embarrassment they were beaten outright in the first ballot, as Poland/Ukraine obtained a majority of the 12 votes – eight to Italy's four (Croatia/Hungary had no backers).

To be fair, Italy had been everyone's favourite to win. But in all the assessments, one item had been overlooked: the change in the political outlook wrought by Platini's accession to the UEFA presidency at the end of January.

For most of the 18-month bidding process it had appeared a no-contest. The Italians had the political clout, the infrastructure and more than enough stadiums to cope not only with a 16-team finals but even the once-projected 24-team event.

Even last year's revelations about the scale of corruption within calcio had hardly rocked the boat. Luca Pancalli, the Italian federation's emergency commissioner, tried to turn logic on its head and boast about evident proof that his organisation was cleaning up its act and the game; a similar twist of logic followed the outbreak of hooligan violence that led to the death of a policeman at a match in Sicily. Sports minister Giovanna Melandri claimed that Italy was now resolving the hooligan issue once and for all.

Anyway, who were their rivals? Poland had a match-fixing scandal of their own which had led the sports minister to suspend the entire FA executive committee, which in turn led FIFA to threaten to suspend Polish teams from international football; Ukraine had been shrouded in suspicions of mafia warfare; and Croatia and Hungary lacked any serious prospect of bringing facilities up to scratch within 10 years, never mind five.

### Complacency

But, as Juventus keeper Gianluigi Buffon said: "We were guilty of far too much complacency. It's as if our people don't understand how badly all our troubles play outside our borders."

They also did not comprehend how Platini's UEFA accession had inspired a change of political focus within the European body. At one stage, the Frenchman had been considered an ally for Italy because of his family's Italian roots and an outstanding playing career with Juventus. But his victory over long-serving Swede Lennart Johansson should have demanded instant reassessment.

Suddenly, western Europe's traditional giants were on the back foot after this demonstration of a more egalitarian mood. Platini had gained a significant block of votes from eastern Europe. Clearly, the middle-ranking and minnow nations of Europe were no longer content to accept the financial hand-outs from the Champions League coffers. They wanted – and Platini said he wanted for them – a greater level of central participation in the European game, and not only in terms of Champions League access but also the international calendar, which includes the World Cup and European Championship fixtures structure.

Italian football, after decades of corrupt excess to which the rest of the footballing world has turned a blind eye, had been put to the sword. Italy had been declared a footballing pariah and the "big" nations of the world game – who include Spain, France, England, Brazil and Argentina – had been warned their days of dictatorship were over.

For example, the prospects of the big five European leagues – England, Italy, Spain, Germany and France – resisting the reduction in Champions League access for the top nations are now significantly weakened, whatever G-14 may say.

Power rests now, in Europe at least, with the middle-ranking, middle-size nations whose voting block within UEFA has been ramped up by the political upheavals that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the break-up of Yugoslavia.

All the small independent nations that came into being as a result of those events raised UEFA's membership from the mid-30s to more than 50 – and, finally, we can see the effects of the change in the balance of power.

Giancarlo Abete, new president of the embattled Italian federation, had met Sepp Blatter in Zurich the week before the vote on 2012 and had come away convinced that the FIFA president would recommend the Italian bid to Platini, his political pupil and protege. Instead, it seems Blatter may have leaned the other way.

Abete told me: "Well, I would never have dared say that I thought Blatter had 'given' us the European finals and I do not feel betrayed either. But we must just put this down to the way the geography of European football has changed. I don't think the [Italian] match-fixing scandal affected anything; maybe the hooligan trouble at the recent Roma-Manchester United game was a problem. More than anything I think we lost because other people lacked confidence in our nation's overall ability to deliver this project – which is very sad."

Interestingly, the state presidents of Poland and Ukraine attended the presentation of the bids but Italy's did not. Sports minister Melandri was the Italians' highest-ranking official. She says: "We have to accept this defeat in a sporting way and accept that it recognises the enlargement of a 'new' Europe. It will not deflect us from proceeding with all the measures we have proposed to renovate our stadiums and end the scourge of hooligan violence."

Melandri may be too optimistic for her own good. While Italy was chasing the dream of hosting the European Championship finals for a third time – after 1968 and 1980 – the need for expenditure on modernising calcio's infrastructure was irresistible and widely accepted.

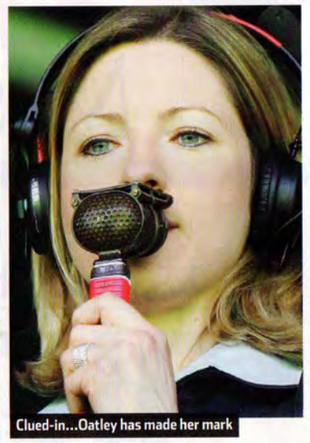
But now? Sadly, the political will to achieve change will fade and Italian football will remain a political, commercial and social minefield. The success on the pitch in last year's World Cup is utterly at odds with the anarchic reality of the country's domestic game.

On the day of the Euro 2012 vote, almost unnoticed amid the fall-out from Cardiff, a magistrate in Naples announced an investigation into a further 49 suspected "fixed" matches in 2004.

Italian football is, it seems, a scandal without end. ●

Beaten look...Italian chief Giancarlo Abete

> "Italian football, after decades of corrupt excess to which the rest of the world has turned a blind eye, had been put to the sword"


Clued-in...Oatley has made her mark

## BBC's Oatley defies the sceptics

MALE CHAUVINISM came to the fore after the BBC launched its first woman football commentator on *Match of the Day*. Opinions may vary about whether a higher-pitched voice can withstand the battering of crowd sound but that is another issue beyond "mere" gender.

Jacqui Oatley has been a sports reporter on the BBC's radio channels for four years and made sure she was perfectly clued-in – cliches included – for her *MOTD* debut, Fulham's 1-1 draw with Blackburn at Craven Cottage.

Dave Bassett, the former Wimbledon and Nottingham Forest manager who was an obvious target for mischief-seeking reporters to question, suggested that commentary demands a playing knowledge to understand all the tactical nuances. In fact, Oatley was a keen player until she suffered a serious knee injury at the age of 27.

She said: "I don't think of this as breaking down barriers for women in sport. I do it for the same reason any man does: I love football."

# Missing the target

## Forget diving; tactical fouling is a much bigger problem for football

DISGUSTING. A totally suitable word, I would say, to describe the reaction of Getafe coach Bernd Schuster to Lionel Messi's brilliant goal for Barcelona against his team. A goal that had the football world agog with excitement and praise, one of the greatest ever...and this is what we got from Schuster: "We should have stopped him before he got to the area, even if it cost us a yellow card."

A mean, sour, nasty little comment, but one that nicely sums up the meanness, sourness and nastiness of much of modern football. Anyone with the integrity of the sport in his heart must deplore such a view and despair that it came from someone who was a player of considerable skill.

Perhaps the most appalling aspect about the German's remark is that he felt quite comfortable making it. He knows that what he is saying is acceptable. His judgement on how to crush the skill of Messi will not be greeted with howls of protest and outrage because it represents the thinking of all his fellow coaches.

When an opponent turns on some exceptional soccer skills – no, even before that, when he looks like he might be on the point of doing something brilliant – knock him down, at once. Schuster's Getafe players didn't do that, and the coach criticises them because they actually played the sport according to its rules.

It's the shortest of steps from slamming your own players when they don't break the rules to praising them when they do. Thus Germany coach Rudi Voller piled praise on Michael Ballack after the 2002 World Cup semi-final win against South Korea. Ballack had earned himself a yellow card that put him out of the Final, prompting Voller to say: "He committed a tactical foul that was absolutely necessary...the entire country will stand and applaud him."

And so our highly trained coaches join forces with the witches in *Macbeth*, echoing their chant: "Fair is foul and foul is fair."

Fair play – if that sounds vaguely familiar, maybe it's because FIFA makes a big deal of its Fair Play campaign. Well-intentioned it may be, but it advocates a highly selective sort of fair play. Of course it targets the cheats, that's totally logical; but it sees only one form of cheating: diving.

### Repeated warnings

Hence the repeated warnings from FIFA and other soccer authorities about the possibly fatal effect on the sport that the crime of diving will have. So, in the same week as Messi's wondergoal, Internazionale's Adriano is given a two-game suspension for conning a referee. I can applaud that verdict while at the same time deploring the witch-hunt that brought it about.

Things would be bad enough if it were simply a matter of coaches encouraging their players to commit fouls. But we are seeing a much more sinister aspect of this tactic. When Messi ran riot against Chelsea in last season's Champions League game at Stamford Bridge, he was smashed to the ground by Chelsea's Asier Del Horno, who was sent off. Enter coach Jose Mourinho. Nothing so blatant as praise for Del Horno, but instead snide accusations that Messi wasn't really fouled at all, that he "sought" the collision. "How do you say 'cheat' in Catalan?" was Mourinho's sly question.

The same label of "cheat" has been attached to another mesmerising player, Cristiano Ronaldo. So he gets booed wherever he plays in England, and we get another example of reprehensible behaviour from a manager who should know better. This time it's Middlesbrough's Gareth Southgate, with his repeated suggestions that Ronaldo cons referees to win penalties.

Southgate's attacks bore their inevitable fruit when one of his players, James Morrison, launched himself violently at Ronaldo's ankles and got red-carded for his effort. George Boateng, the Middlesbrough captain, then uttered what can only be seen as a thinly disguised threat to Ronaldo: "Someday someone will hurt him properly." Southgate, whose insinuations about Ronaldo had created the atmosphere that led to Morrison's foul and Boateng's threat, then added hypocrisy to his achievements by declaring Boateng's remark "not correct" and disciplining him with some unrevealed punishment.

Next came Belgian goalkeeper Stijn Stijnen, with his threat that Belgium would have to rough up Ronaldo, who plays for Euro 2008 opponents Portugal, and get him taken off the field on a stretcher. That last remark – denied, of course – actually made its way to the headquarters of UEFA, which promised an investigation. Of what, one wonders? Of defining a little too clearly, as Schuster did, the current morality of the game?

But Schuster's comment, like those of Mourinho and Southgate and Boateng, apparently went unnoticed by the authorities. So it's OK for a coach to encourage his players to foul opponents and then to accuse the victims of diving and tar them with the "cheat" label.

What is needed from FIFA and its referees is the enforcement of a fair play programme that attacks one of the major problems of the modern game: the absurd leniency shown to players who practise, and coaches who encourage, a form of cheating that is more insidious, more physically dangerous and much more frequent than diving: cynical, tactical fouling. ●

Illustration by Dave Semple

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# Staying local

## David Dein has been ousted at Arsenal as the other directors take a stand against a US buyout

THE FORCING OUT of David Dein by the other directors around the Arsenal boardroom table shocked a football public used to the portrayal of him as a consummate politician and the visionary architect of all that Arsenal have achieved in modern times.

The truth is more humdrum; Dein was indeed an advocate of Arsene Wenger in 1996, although clearly the Gunners' great manager was appointed by agreement of all the directors, and Dein did wheel and deal on the money and contracts for the players Wenger wanted. He was not, though, a supporter initially of building the Emirates stadium, and that put a distance between him and the rest of the board.

Wenger, who worked so closely with Dein, did pay tribute to his "class and intelligence" after the club drummed out the former vice-chairman, but it was important to listen to what else Wenger said. He talked mostly about the club, not about Dein, and he agreed with the rest of the board that Arsenal should not be taken over by billionaire American Stan Kroenke, not because of his nationality but because the club would not necessarily be better off for it.

Wenger observed what football fans need to understand more fully – that the clubs recently taken over by US billionaires have not been handed pots of cash to spend. Quite the opposite. Manchester United have a £575million debt to service from the 2005 takeover by the Glazer family, a drain on the money they need to compete at football's eye-wateringly expensive highest level. Nor have Liverpool been given money by Tom Hicks and George Gillett, who completed their takeover in the same week that Arsenal's chairman, Peter Hill-Wood, was expressing his fierce determination to resist one.

### Way ahead of Liverpool

In fact, Liverpool, whose Anfield ground has a capacity of only 48,500, had a desperate need to be taken over because they have fallen behind Chelsea (whose Russian oligarch owner has showered them with money) and Manchester United, who have the 76,000-seat money-making machine called Old Trafford. Arsenal, too, are way ahead of Liverpool financially because they have already built the Emirates, with its 60,000 seats, high-priced tickets and luxurious corporate entertainment facilities. This is making the club double what they could earn at old, monumental Highbury.

In a country becoming blase about US takeovers, following the fury of United fans' opposition, Hill-Wood's vitriolic rejection of Kroenke came as a shock. He said that he and the other directors and major shareholders, including Danny Fiszman, who owns 24 per cent of Arsenal, would be "horrified if the club were to go across the Atlantic" and "had no intention of selling out to some stranger".

Some criticised Hill-Wood for these sentiments, and it is a delicate balance not to seem anti-foreign, but it is surely right to question whether it is good for football clubs, based as they are on passionate local loyalties, to become owned by foreign investors, who see them as lucrative businesses.

In the aftermath of Dein's departure, Hill-Wood struggled to get a hearing as he tried to explain why he believed a takeover would be wrong. He pointed out that the other American investors in English football had not brought cash for clubs, but "see an opportunity to make money". Hicks and Gillett have borrowed the money to buy Liverpool and, like the Glazers and Randy Lerner at Aston Villa, will expect a tidy return some time soon. Hill-Wood said resolutely that Arsenal are not in the desperate position of needing a deal like that because they were brave and positive enough to build their new stadium without overseas billionaires to guarantee the borrowings.

In turning down a takeover, he and the other shareholders are also rejecting a huge personal pay day. At £6,800 per share, the price Kroenke paid to ITV for its 10 per cent holding in Arsenal, Hill-Wood would have made £3.4million from selling his 500. Fiszman, a diamond trader who, quietly, drove through the Emirates project, would have made £102m.

In all the reviews of Dein's career at Arsenal and in football politics in general, it was overlooked that he has made a personal fortune from his involvement in the game, by selling his Arsenal shares to Fiszman in chunks. If he does indeed favour a Kroenke takeover, he stands to make £60m from selling out.

The other Arsenal directors, however peremptory their action on Dein appeared, said they were acting in the club's best interests, a view with which Wenger seemed to agree. They are not taking the opportunity, grabbed zealously by shareholders at other clubs, to head for the exit with bucketfuls of cash. ●

Illustration by Dave Semple

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High point...the Acropolis is Athens' main attraction, at least when the Champions League Final is not in town

# The stage is set

## Peterjon Cresswell takes a tour of the Champions League Final host city

THE SETTING FOR the Champions League Final, on May 23, could not be better. Athens' Olympic stadium had a complete overhaul for the 2004 Games under renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava and now has a capacity of over 70,000. It currently hosts most league home games of Panathinaikos and AEK, two of Greece's big three clubs.

The other one, Olympiakos, the most successful club in the country in recent years, are based at the Yorgos Karaiskakis stadium in the nearby port of Piraeus. That ground was also revamped for 2004.

Olympiakos, known as *Gavri* (little fish), have just won the league title for the 10th time in 11 seasons. But while the club, backed by mobile-phone millionaire Sokratis Kokkalis and with ex-player Takis Lemonis as coach, have domestic dominance, they have failed to make much of an impact in European competition.

Olympiakos, formed in 1925, are also known as *Thrylos* (legend) after their famous original five-man forward line, the Andrianopoulos brothers. After helping the team lift four of the first six Greek titles, the quintet persuaded the Greek Olympic Committee to convert an old velodrome used for the first modern Olympics of 1896 into an athletics and football ground. In 2004, the last surviving brother, 94-year-old Leonidas, lit the flame for the Olympic torch relay at Piraeus.

> **"Olympiakos have won the Greek title in 10 of the past 11 seasons but have failed to make much of an impact in European competition"**

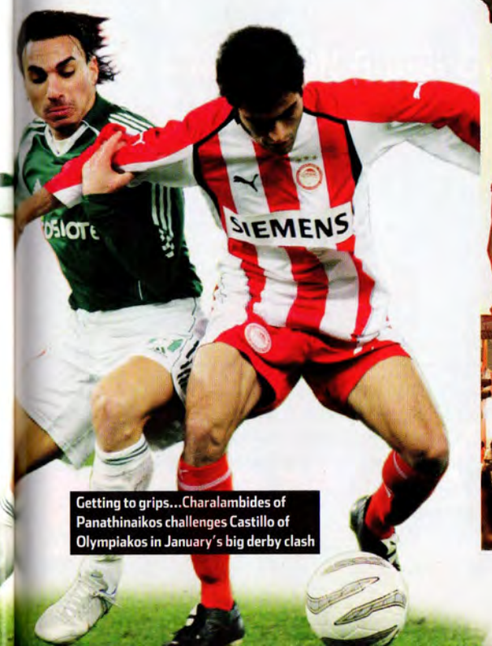
Traditionally, the club draw their support from the blue-collar port workers – in contrast to Panathinaikos, whose permanent base is in the wealthy area of Ambelokipi, in the north-west of Athens.

### Shamrock badge

Panathinaikos, Greece's oldest club, having been founded in 1908, wear green and bear a shamrock badge but there is no connection with Ireland. The emblem was adopted on the suggestion of a Greek athlete. Pana have used the Apostolos Nikolaidis stadium, close to Ambelokipi station, since its construction in 1922 but because it is only modest they have been playing nearly all home games at the Olympic stadium for more than 20 years.

A new ground has been discussed for years but despite the club's white-collar image, funds have not been forthcoming.

Games between Panathinaikos and Olympiakos are the biggest in Greek sport.



Getting to grips...Charalambides of Panathinaikos challenges Castillo of Olympiakos in January's big derby clash

SURVIVAL GUIDE

## Acropolis now

**● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT**

Athens' airport is 27km east of the city centre. Metro line 3 links with the central Syntagma station – journey time 30 minutes, one-way ticket €6 (£4). The second stop from the airport, Doukissis Plakentias, connects to the suburban railway line (Proastiakos; top picture) up to Neratziotissa, close to the Olympic stadium.

An airport express bus, the X95, runs to Syntagma Square (journey time 70 minutes) round the clock. A one-way ticket costs €3.20 (£2.15). A taxi should cost €20-30 (£13-20).

Central Athens is served by a three-line metro system. A single ticket is €1 (70p). There are also buses and trolleybuses. A one-day ticket (€3/£2) allows travel on most public transport. Visit www.oasa.gr for details.

The city's yellow taxis can be flagged down or hired at the rank at Syntagma near Ermou.

**● HOTELS**

The Greek tourism organisation (main Athens office at 7 Tsoha, Ambelokipi; +30 210 870 7000; www.gnto.gr) offers information on accommodation.

One of the smarter hotels, at €200 (£135) per double room per night, is the centrally located Electra Palace (18-20 N. Nikodimou; +30 210 337 0000; www.electrahotels.gr). The mid-range Hera (9 Falirou; +30 210 923 6682; www.herahotel.gr) and Plaka (pictured second top) (7 Kapnikareas & Mitropoleos; +30 210 322 2706 or 2707; www.plakahotel.gr), both around €150 (£100), are also conveniently situated. Budget options include the €85 (£60) Adonis (3 Kodrou & Voulis; +30 210 324 9737) near Syntagma and the €60 (£40) Fivos (23 Athinas; +30 210 322 6657; www.consolas.gr).

**● EATING & DRINKING**

The Greeks eat late and traditional tavernas are still the mainstay – Athinaikon (2 Themistokleous, Omonia Square), Giouvetsakia (144 Adrianou, Plaka) and To Steki tou Ilia (7 Thessalonikis, Thissio) are three fine examples. Terrace cafes in Thissio, Kolonaki and Plaka throng with locals. Aplakafe (1 Adrianou) and Athinaion Politeia (1 Akamantos) both have great views of the Acropolis.

**● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT**

The Acropolis, one of the wonders of the Ancient World, is a collection of temples and monuments, with the Parthenon as its figurehead. Below, Plaka, with its market, spreads across what was the centre of the old city. The National Archaeological Museum, Byzantine Museum and Benaki Museum are the other must-sees.

**● AFTER DARK**

The hub of the thriving nightlife scene is in Psyrri, the other side of Ermou from Plaka.

Recently all team sports in the country were suspended for a fortnight after supporters from these rival clubs clashed in the distant Athenian suburb of Peania in the run-up to a women's volleyball fixture. There was one fatality. In 1995, clashes after a basketball game between the clubs also led to the death of a fan.

Greek sport has been blighted by fan violence for years. There is no ticket allocation for the visiting club for derby matches. This latest incident has prompted the authorities to start installing CCTV cameras at grounds.

AEK's traditional base is in Nea Filadelfia, in northern Athens, close to that of Panathinaikos. Their Nikos Goumas stadium was hit by an earthquake in 1996 and demolished in 2003. The club are planning a modern, multi-sports arena in the same locality.

AEK were formed in 1924 by Greek refugees fleeing Constantinople after Turkish independence – hence the club's Byzantine double-headed eagle emblem. AEK have a particularly bitter rivalry with Olympiakos because the Piraeus club poached their mercurial coach, Dusan Bajevic, in 1996 to begin their run of domestic title success. Bajevic returned to oversee AEK's Champions League campaign of 2002. Ambitious young president Demis Nikolaidis, the former international and an AEK fan from boyhood, took control in 2004, assuming their massive debt. Season ticket sales for games at the Olympic stadium are healthy and the yellow-and-blacks are Champions League regulars. ●

Flaring up...a Panathinaikos fan shows his fervour

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## THE STADIUMS

Top: the Karaiskakis. Above, left and right: the Olympic

## Underneath the arches

THE NEW, rebuilt Olympiako Stadio Athinas Spyros Louis (37 Kifissias, Maroussi; +30 210 683 4060 or 4061; www.oaka.com.gr) was inaugurated days before the official opening of the 2004 Olympic Games. The two-year reconstruction, under renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, cost £175million. Its main features are the twin arches, spanning 304 metres and rising to 72 metres, which support the stylish, functional polycarbonate roof. The stadium, part of a complex that includes a pool, indoor arena and velodrome, dominates Maroussi, a northern suburb 9km from the city centre.

The original ground, opened in 1982, was constructed on a site dotted with classical antiquities – Roman baths were discovered during the rebuild. Spyros Louis, the winner of the marathon at the first modern Olympics, in 1896, was a Maroussi local. The stadium hosted two European Cup finals and many big domestic fixtures before closure for reconstruction in 2002.

Calatrava's impressive creation consists of two rings of seating, divided into 35 sections. Capacity is 71,030. The nearest metro station is Irini on green line 1, a 10-minute walk. The journey time from central Omonio is 25 minutes. Near Irini is the railway station of Neratziotissa, linked to Doukissis Plakentias metro station, which is within easy reach of the airport.

There are three main ticket offices in the complex: one right by Irini metro, one on Kimis nearby, and one behind the east goal.

You can arrange a group tour of the complex (€3/£2 per person) by fax on +30 210 683 4021. For more information, phone +30 210 683 4777.

The other main stadium in town is Yorgos Karaiskakis (www.karaiskaki.gr), in Piraeus, home of Olympiakos. The recently renovated arena was originally built as a velodrome for the 1896 Olympics, converted for football in 1936 and refurbished in the 1960s. Chelsea won the European Cup-Winners Cup there in 1971. There was a stadium tragedy in 1981 – 21 fans died during a crush at an Olympiakos-AEK Athens match. Banners are still displayed at every match to honour the victims.

The stadium, accessed from the Faliro metro station on green line 1, holds 33,000. There is now a club museum (closed Mondays).



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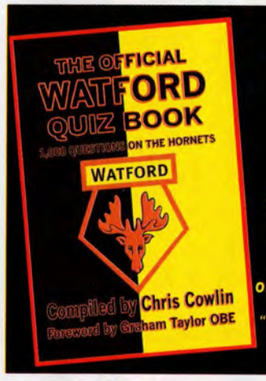


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Same again?...Liverpool's Steven Gerrard and Milan's Gennaro Gattuso are likely to come face to face in this season's Champions League Final – just as in 2005

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Repeat performance

**MILAN VERY nearly did not take part in this season's Champions League having dropped out of the qualifying places as a result of the hefty points deduction for their part in the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal. But the punishment was reduced on appeal, allowing them to enter the third qualifying round, and now they have reached the Final, in Athens on May 23, for the 10th time. Milan's victories over Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals and then Manchester United in the semis has set up a repeat of the epic Istanbul Final of 2005 against Liverpool, the conquerors of Chelsea in the other semi.**

In control...Clarence Seedorf shields the ball from Darren Fletcher of Manchester United during Milan's 3-0 home win

## QUARTER-FINALS

Bayern Munich had the edge after drawing 2-2 in Milan in the first leg. The German champions twice came from behind, with both goals coming from the unlikely source of Belgian defender Daniel Van Buyten.

Bayern keeper Michael Rensing, deputising for the suspended Oliver Kahn, made some impressive saves early on, but could not deal with Andrea Pirlo's looping header in the 40th minute. Van Buyten equalised from close range with 12 minutes remaining, but Milan regained the lead six minutes from time, Kaka scoring from a penalty after Lucio was harshly adjudged to have fouled his Brazilian international team-mate. Van Buyten capitalised on uncertainty in the home defence to clinch a draw with the last kick.

Bayern had the better of the early exchanges in Munich, but two Milan goals halfway through the first half killed off the tie. First, Clarence Seedorf wrong-footed Van Buyten and fired low past Kahn, restored to the line-up. Then the Dutchman turned provider, flicking a pass through the middle into the path of Filippo Inzaghi, who slotted home.

Liverpool comfortably beat PSV Eindhoven, effectively securing their passage with a 3-0 win in Holland in the first leg. A well-placed header from Steven Gerrard and a powerful shot from John Arne Riise sent Liverpool on their way, with Peter Crouch adding a headed goal with half an hour to play.

Liverpool rested several players for the return but were rarely troubled by PSV, whose problems increased when debutant Dirk Marcellis was sent off midway through the second half for a foul on Boudewijn Zenden.

Three minutes later, Crouch scored the only goal of the game, tapping home Robbie Fowler's cross.

The first leg of Manchester United's meeting with Roma was overshadowed by the violent treatment of their fans by Italian police in the Olympic stadium. UEFA fined Roma £31,000 and United £14,500 for the disturbances.

Ground level...Chelsea keeper Petr Cech concedes the aggregate equaliser from Liverpool's Daniel Agger (out of picture)

Roma's ruin...Ronaldo makes it 5-0

A tentative game came to life after United midfielder Paul Scholes was sent off for a second yellow-card offence in the 34th minute. Roma went ahead just before half-time, Taddei striking from a quickly taken corner. Wayne Rooney equalised on the hour when he finished off a wonderful counter-attack that began from a Roma corner. But Mirko Vucinic made it 2-1 six minutes later.

United had not overcome a first-leg deficit in Europe since 1984, but they ended that run in style, subjecting Roma to a humiliating 7-1 rout at Old Trafford. They were 4-0 up at half-time on goals from Michael Carrick, Alan Smith, Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo. Carrick and Ronaldo both also scored after the break, along with Patrice Evra, in a performance many considered to be United's most impressive in Europe since the 1960s.

A brilliant looping, long-range goal from youngster David Silva gave Valencia the lead in the first leg away to Chelsea, but Didier Drogba snatched an equaliser following a mistake by Roberto Ayala. The return looked to be heading for extra-time after Andrii Shevchenko's second-half goal cancelled out Fernando Morientes' strike on the half-hour. But Michael Essien's rasping drive from a tight angle in the 91st minute put Chelsea into the semis.

## SEMI-FINALS

In a repeat of the 2005 semi-final, Liverpool once again had the edge over Chelsea, though they needed a penalty shoot-out to reach their seventh European Cup Final and the second in three seasons under Rafa Benitez.

Chelsea, taking part in their third semi in four years, took the lead after half an hour of the home, first leg through Joe Cole, who turned home a Drogba cross. Spectacular saves from both keepers (Liverpool's Jose Reina from Frank Lampard, Petr Cech from Gerrard) prevented any more goals.

Liverpool adopted a more direct approach for the return, with Crouch in the starting line-up. An injury to Ricardo Carvalho forced Chelsea to play Essien in central defence, while Shevchenko was controversially omitted, apparently with a groin injury.

The only goal of the night came from Liverpool defender Daniel Agger, who clipped in Gerrard's disguised low free-kick from the edge of the area.

In extra-time, Dirk Kuijt was unluckily ruled offside having turned in the rebound from a Xabi Alonso effort.

Reina saved Chelsea's first penalty in the shoot-out, from Arjen Robben, and then their third, from Geremi. Liverpool scored four out of four – from Zenden, Xabi Alonso, Gerrard and Kuijt.

Manchester United had also faced Italian opposition, Juventus, in the semi-finals on their way to Champions League triumph in 1999, but this time they were outclassed by an experienced Milan side for whom Kaka excelled.

United were without defenders Rio Ferdinand and Nemanja Vidic for the home, first leg but took an early lead when keeper Dida failed to cope with Cristiano Ronaldo's header from a corner. Then Kaka came into his own, twice racing through the makeshift back-line to convert and put Milan in the driving seat at half-time.

The Italians then suffered their own injury problems, Paolo Maldini and Gennaro Gattuso both forced off, allowing United back into the game. Rooney turned in from close range after a brilliant though ball from Scholes and then scored the winner, with a fierce shot, in injury-time.

Kaka put Milan level on aggregate after just 11 minutes of the return, and Seedorf made it 2-0 on the night after half an hour, taking advantage of a mix-up between Vidic and Gabriel Heinze.

As United pushed forward in search of the goals they now needed, substitute Alberto Gilardino took advantage, adding a third to seal Milan's progress.

**Gavin Hamilton**

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HOLLAND

# PSV pip Ajax

PSV EINDHOVEN snatched victory from the jaws of defeat in a sensational championship climax, pipping Ajax by a single goal to win their third successive title.

The champions, who had led by 11 points at the winter break, went into the final round only level on points with their Amsterdam rivals and AZ. The Alkmaar club were favourites to clinch the trophy since they had a better goal difference. However, Louis Van Gaal's talented but inexperienced side could not handle the pressure, losing 3-2 at lowly Excelsior. Ajax beat Willem II 2-0 away but there was no holding Ronald Koeman's PSV, who thrashed Vitesse 5-1 in Eindhoven.

There was consternation in the PSV camp after the team managed only a 1-1 draw away to Utrecht in the penultimate round. Angry fans invaded the training ground asking for an explanation, PSV's South American players bemoaned the lack of a "warm character" such as Guus Hiddink, Koeman's predecessor, and forward Patrick Kluivert called the decision to use 16-year-old Genaro Zeefuik instead of him as a substitute in the Utrecht game as "embarrassing". Many others at PSV had openly questioned Kluivert's fitness.

Even now, after winning the title, it appears Koeman's days in Eindhoven are numbered. Phillip Cocu is a definite departee, and appeared set to join a club in the Middle East or Australia.

Erwin Koeman could well be joining his brother in the job market after Feyenoord missed out on the play-off games to determine Holland's other Champions League representative by losing 5-1 at Heerenveen. Afonso Alves hit four of the goals, to finish league top scorer on 34.

Den Haag were relegated in their final season at the Zuiderpark stadium. The last home game, against Groningen, had to be abandoned just after half-time because fans threw fireworks on to the pitch with their side losing 3-0.

De Graafschap are promoted after two years in the second level. The Super Farmers boast former Millwall striker Berry Powell, who scored 29 goals this season.

Raymond Atteveld has been appointed coach of Roda JC. The former Everton player and Roda assistant had been in charge in a caretaker capacity since Huub Stevens left for Hamburg.

Quincy Owusu-Abeyie has decided to play for Ghana, his parents' native country. The former Arsenal player was a member of the 2005 Dutch Under-20 World Youth Cup squad but no longer features in the plans of coach Foppe de Haan.

**Klaas-Jan Droppert**

Dutch treat...PSV players celebrate their dramatic title success on the last day

BELGIUM

### End of the road for Bruges duo

It's all change on the coaching front in Bruges. Club Brugge, just coming to the end of their most disappointing season for a decade, are replacing Macedonian Cedomir Janevski with Jacky Mathijssen, from Charleroi. Janevski had been in charge only since January, following the dismissal of Emilio Ferrera.

Glen De Boeck, currently assistant to Anderlecht boss Frankie Vercauteren, is to take the head coach job at Cercle Brugge. The former international defender will succeed Harm Van Veldhoven, who is joining Germinal Beerschot as the replacement for Marc Brys.

Elsewhere, relegation-threatened Beveren sacked Walter Meeuws.

On the field, Anderlecht stayed two points clear at the top from Genk with three games to play after thrashing Roeselare 5-0 away.

**Nicholas Harling**

PORTUGAL

### Porto hit form

FC Porto, boosted by the return of teenage phenomenon Anderson and with Ricardo Quaresma and Adriano in shining form, won three league games in a row in April to stay on course for a second successive championship. The run included a 5-1 thrashing of Vitoria Setubal.

However, Sporting Lisbon were still in contention, four points behind with four games remaining, after a six-match winning streak. The Lions are also into the Cup Final after beating Beira Mar 2-1.

They will meet Belenenses, who defeated Sporting Braga by the same score in the other semi.

Benfica's championship challenge faded after drawing three successive games during April. They also exited the UEFA Cup to complete a disappointing campaign for Portuguese clubs, losing 3-2 on aggregate to Espanyol in the quarter-finals.

**Pedro Pinto**

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

### Derry step up

Derry City, last year's league runners-up, are to compete in the 2007-08 Champions League after champions Shelbourne did not seek a UEFA licence. Shels were demoted to the first division before the start of the current league campaign because of their dire financial state. St Patrick's Athletic, who lost to Derry in last season's Cup Final, now take the vacant UEFA Cup spot.

St Pat's and Drogheda United were the pacesetters after seven rounds of the new season.

Cork City have been caught out by FIFA's rule forbidding players from appearing for three clubs in 12 months. They signed Gareth Farrelly and Colin Healy in February but will not be able to register them until July.

**Sean Creedon**

LIECHTENSTEIN

### Eschen-Mauren's double blow

Eschen-Mauren and their second-string team both lost in the cup semi-finals, to Vaduz (3-1) and Ruggell (2-0) respectively.

Vaduz, who have won the trophy for the past nine seasons, have signed striker Sandro Marini from Swiss side St Gallen.

**Graeme Crawford**

SWITZERLAND

# Frei captain but split remains

NATIONAL COACH Kobi Kuhn has named Borussia Dortmund striker Alexander Frei as captain in succession to Johann Vogel after Lyon defender Patrick Muller said he was not interested in the post.

Muller said he was not satisfied with Kuhn's explanation for the abrupt dismissal of Vogel in March, just before a 10-day training camp in Florida. The coach had said the Real Betis defensive midfielder lacked leadership qualities.

The US trip, during which Switzerland beat Jamaica 2-0 but lost to Colombia 3-1, did little to end the disharmony. A clear rift had opened between the French-speakers, who include Muller, and the German-speakers, led by Frei. Some pundits think the sacking of Vogel, believed to be the rallying point for the French-speakers, was Kuhn's attempt to end the split. If so, it appears to have failed. Lazio midfielder Valon Behrami could not resist a swipe at Kuhn after the trip, describing it as "a school excursion". The 22-year-old, one of the few national squad members to play regularly for his club, is frustrated that he is usually only a substitute for Switzerland.

The exodus of young talent has continued, with Under-21 international Zdravko Kuzmanovic joining Fiorentina from Basle.

Basle beat league leaders Zurich home and away in April to close the gap to three points. However, Zurich received a timely boost when awarded a 3-0 victory for their April 1 game against St Gallen. The tie had originally ended 0-0, but St Gallen were penalised for fielding an ineligible player.

**Ivar von Rulach**

Lead role...Frei has plenty to do if he is to help improve the spirit in the Swiss camp

Sparkle...Salzburg coach Giovanni Trapattoni

AUSTRIA

# Salzburg soar with Trapattoni

SALZBURG HAVE WON their first league title under energy drink tycoon Dietrich Mateschitz, clinching it with six games to spare with a 2-0 victory away to Altach.

The Red Bull millionaire bought the financially stricken club in the summer of 2005, but despite investing in a number of ageing stars, they missed out on the championship last season to Austria Wien.

Out went coach Kurt Jara, to be replaced by Italian veteran Giovanni Trapattoni, who, in the words of the Red Bull drink advertising slogan, gave the side wings. "It is always a very emotional moment to win a title. I am happy for the team, for the club owners and the fans," said the former Juventus and Italy boss.

Trapattoni, one of the world's most successful coaches, created a good mix of classy veterans and young talent. The squad features a number of current internationals, including Rene Aufhauser, Swiss Johan Vonlanthen, Japanese pair Alex and Tsuneyasu Miyamoto, Slovakian Vladimir Janocko and Croatian Niko Kovac, plus a couple of Germans with Champions League experience – Alexander Zickler and Thomas Linke.

The champions had not lost a single home match in their first 30 games, and had a goal difference of plus 45.

**Harry Miltner**

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SCOTLAND

# Celtic supreme

**CELTIC COMPLETED THEIR procession to a second successive league title with a 2-1 win at Kilmarnock in the fifth last game. A superb injury-time free-kick by Japan's Shunsuke Nakamura secured the win, which put the team 13 points clear of closest challengers Rangers.**

**Manager Gordon Strachan had received a lukewarm reception from Celtic fans when he replaced Martin O'Neill in summer 2005. But they have finally come to acknowledge his undoubted managerial skills after back-to-back championships plus a run to this season's Champions League first knockout round.**

**Strachan now has his sights set on the Double after Celtic reached the Cup Final, on May 26, with a 2-1 defeat of St Johnstone. The Final will be captain Neil Lennon's last match for Celtic. The midfielder announced his intention to leave Parkhead after a six-and-a-half-year stint. Celtic will face Dunfermline, who beat Hibernian 1-0 in a replay in the other semi. A few days before the original tie, a 0-0 draw, Hibs players met chairman Rod Petrie to express their concerns about the management style of John Collins, despite the fact they had won the League Cup three weeks before.**

**Alan Fairley**

Party time...manager Gordon Strachan and soon-to-depart captain Neil Lennon celebrate Celtic's latest championship triumph

DENMARK

### Copenhagen cruise control

Reigning champions FC Copenhagen are running away with this season's championship, opening a 13-point gap on second-placed Midtjylland on the back of a 20-match unbeaten run with seven rounds remaining. A 3-1 defeat of Horsens on April 22 was their sixth win in a row and they have lost only once in 26 rounds.

Brondby, who beat Copenhagen in the Royal League Final in March, have struggled in the championship. A 3-0 defeat away to bottom side Vejle left them only sixth, 25 points off the pace.

**Jim Holden**

SWEDEN

### Djurgardens get a Grip

Djurgardens quickly recovered from their shock 1-0 opening-day defeat to promoted Brommapojkarna, winning their next two games to go top of the table. The Stockholm club, coached by former Iceland international Siggi Jonsson and with former England assistant Tord Grip as a tactical advisor, beat Halmstads 2-0 and then Henrik Larsson's Helsingborgs 3-1.

Malmo, the title favourites pre-season, lost 2-1 to Trelleborgs in the Skane province derby to put pressure on coach Soren Akerby.

International forward Johan Elmander is likely to be one of the most sought-after names in the summer transfer market after his starring role in Toulouse's surge up the French League.

**Pentti Hietanen**

FINLAND

### Kaven enjoys extra time at Tampere

National team goalkeeper Mikko Kaven has signed a new two-year contract with champions Tampere United as he looks to improve on his two Finnish records.

The 31-year-old extended his run of consecutive league games to 165 in Tampere's opening-day 1-1 draw away to VPS Vaasa. Kaven has also kept more clean sheets (93) than any other keeper in top-division games.

"Mikko is an integral part of our team," said Tampere coach Ari Hjelm. "We have plans of joining the real elite of champions, for over the past 25 years only FC Haka have managed to win two league titles in a row in Finland."

MyPa have signed Chinese midfielder Gao Leilei, formerly with New Zealand Knights, while HJK Helsinki have recruited ex-Dundee United Scottish midfielder Grant Smith.

**Pentti Hietanen**





ICELAND

### Sigthorsson, teen sensation

While the senior national team will miss out on the Euro 2008 finals, Iceland's Under-17s have reached their equivalent for the first time.

The star of the show so far has been striker Kolbeinn Sigthorsson, who hit four goals against reigning Under-17 champions Russia in an astonishing 6-5 win to blast Iceland into the finals, being staged in Belgium this month. He also hit a brace in the 2-2 qualifying draw against Northern Ireland.

Sigthorsson, the brother of Andri Sigthorsson, the former Bayern Munich and Iceland striker, turned 17 only in April but has already represented the national Under-19 side and helped his club, HK, to reach the top division.

**Rab Christie**

ESTONIA

### Kalev trip up champions

Defending champions Levadia Tallinn surprisingly lost their unbeaten league record to promoted Kalev Tallinn, 1-0. Although Levadia were still top, it was only on goal difference from Trans Narva, the last remaining unbeaten side and who had a game in hand.

Aivar Pohlak has been elected FA president. The 44-year-old remains president of club side Flora Tallinn. The FA has been without a formal leader since March last year, when Indrek Kannik stood down.

**Andres Must**

WALES

### Saints struggle across the line

The New Saints secured their third successive championship but made a meal of it, losing two games in a row when they needed just a point to clinch the title before beating Cefn Druids 3-2 away in the penultimate round.

"The third title is the most satisfying as it gets harder each time, with every side wanting to beat the reigning champions," said manager Ken McKenna. New Saints won the first two titles of the run under the name Total Network Solutions.

Rhyl made sure of taking the runners-up spot and entry to the UEFA Cup by holding Llanelli to a 2-2 draw.

Cwmbran Town, inaugural league winners in 1993, were relegated. The club are in financial trouble and players had waived their wages in recent months.

**Mel Thomas**

NORTHERN IRELAND

### Linfield retain title

Linfield retained the championship with a game to spare having effectively secured the title the previous weekend when winning 2-1 away at arch-rivals Glentoran. It was sweet revenge for a last-minute defeat to Glentoran two seasons ago which cost Linfield the championship, in their rivals' favour.

The decision of national team manager Lawrie Sanchez to take control of Fulham in a caretaker capacity has raised fears that the move may become permanent.

**Roy Kitson**

NORWAY

# Brann quick off the mark

**BRANN, LAST SEASON'S early leaders, are quick out of the blocks again, winning their first three games to go top of the table.**

**Bengt Saeternes hit all the Bergen side's goals in the 4-1 defeat of Valerenga, while fellow forward Thorstein Helstad hit three in the first two games – the only goal away to Stabaek and a brace in the 3-1 defeat of promoted Stromsgodset. Champions Rosenborg took only four points from their first three games, which included a 2-1 defeat at Stabaek.**

**Lyn appear to have unearthed a gem in former gymnast Kim Holmen, who offers blinding pace and great aerial ability. The 24-year-old scored twice in the 3-1 defeat of Odd Grenland and celebrated with a series of breathtaking somersaults.**

**Sigurd Odegaard**

To the four...Bengt Saeternes scored all Brann's goals in the convincing defeat of Valerenga

Back in frame...Latvia boss Starkovs

LATVIA

# Starkovs restored

ALEKSANDRS STARKOVS, the coach who led the national team to Euro 2004, is back at the helm following the resignation of Jurijs Andrejevs after the 1-0 Euro 2008 qualifying defeat by Liechtenstein in March. Starkovs coached Spartak Moscow after the Portugal finals.

FK Riga, who only just escaped relegation last season, were the surprise leaders after winning their first three games this term. They and FK Jurmala, the only other club with maximum points, both beat champions Ventspils.

Dinaburg Daugavpils failed with their appeal to be reinstated to the Baltic League. They were expelled because of a betting scandal.

**Andres Must**

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TURKEY

# Ulusoy: FIFA backs me

Chaos theory...federation president Haluk Ulusoy has hit out at sports minister Mehmet Ali Sahin

**FEDERATION PRESIDENT Haluk Ulusoy has suggested he has FIFA's backing in his power struggle with sports minister Mehmet Ali Sahin.**

**Some weeks ago Ulusoy sent a letter to the world body, reportedly calling for an urgent intervention in the "chaos" which he says reigns in Turkish football because of government intervention. At a recent news conference, the president announced FIFA's reply – that Turkey should reform its laws so that the federation (TFF) could enjoy greater autonomy.**

**According to Ulusoy, FIFA said in the letter, which has not come into the public domain, that it particularly objected to Sahin's capacity to call an emergency meeting of the federation and the ability of the prime minister's office to inspect the TFF's affairs.**

**"We have been saying from the start that the way things are going is wrong," said Ulusoy, who was controversially re-elected last year amid corruption allegations and in the face of a challenge from a government-backed candidate. "We said FIFA would not accept this...If Turkey is in chaos, if football has been divided into camps, then the main architect of this is the minister."**

**Sahin, who says Ulusoy should relinquish his post because of corruption investigations during a previous term in office, made a quick response. "Autonomy in sport is for the development of sport and the improving success of sportsmen and women," he said. "It is not there so that some people can protect their positions."**

**He also claimed that he had not used his powers as a minister to try to set up a new election but that this process was already being set in motion by TFF delegates, as was their right to do so.**

**Suna Erdem**

SERBIA

### Clemente under the cosh

National coach Javier Clemente came in for flak after Serbia's shock 2-1 defeat away to Kazakhstan in the Euro 2008 qualifiers, critics pointing to the fact he had left regular defenders Mladen Krstajic and Ivica Dragutinovic on the bench. Both had been on yellow cards, so the Spaniard had wanted to make sure they were available for the game against Portugal four days later.

Red Star Belgrade beat arch-rivals Partizan twice in a week, in the League and Cup semi-finals, both 1-0, to stay on course for the Double.

OFK Belgrade fired coach Ratko Dostanic after the team missed out on the championship play-offs. His replacement is Branko Vukasinovic. Dostanic was not out of work for long, however, taking the reins at Bezanija Belgrade after Dragoljub Bekvalac left to join Rabotnicki of Macedonia.

**Vladimir Novak**

GREECE

### Hooligan crackdown

The government has rolled out a series of measures to curb hooliganism following the brawl in March between fans of Panathinaikos and Olympiakos, the newly crowned champions, that left one dead and scores injured.

A two-week suspension of all professional sport in the country was imposed with immediate effect, while long-term measures include the installation of CCTV cameras at stadiums and the use of e-ticketing, which allows supporters' details to be stored on computer. The government also decided to ban supporters clubs, which are seen to be at the root of the wave of violence. In the past few weeks, police raided a number of supporters clubs in the Athens area, seizing baseball bats, petrol bombs, knives, slingshots, metal chains and flare guns.

**Lou Economopoulos**

MACEDONIA

### Country under threat of suspension

FIFA and UEFA have threatened to suspend Macedonian teams from international competition because of an attempt to depose FA president Haralampie Hadzi-Risteski by a rebel grouping. The breakaway Board for Change, claiming to have the support of the majority of federation congress members, held a meeting on April 14 at which it discussed the replacement of Hadzi-Risteski and set a date, May 19, for the election of a new president.

The two governing bodies take a dim view of interference in the affairs of national associations.

Rabotnicki Kometal, in the hunt for their third successive league title, sacked Gjorgji Jovanovski after the team were held to three draws in a row. His replacement, Serb Dragoljub Bekvalac, got Rabotnicki back on track with wins in his first three games.

**Michel Stojmanovski**

CROATIA

### Markovic takes the flak

There have been calls for the resignation of federation president Vlatko Markovic following the failure of Croatia and Hungary's joint bid to host Euro 2012. Markovic had said that success was definite, claiming seven of the 12 UEFA executive committee members eligible to vote had pledged to support the bid. But in fact it did not garner a single vote.

The president responded to the criticism by saying that UEFA president Michel Platini was as surprised as he was and that the Croatian federation would be claiming up to £2.5million in compensation from UEFA. The grounds for such a claim are unclear.

**Zdravko Reic**

SLOVENIA

### Domzale in the clear

Domzale were in touching distance of the title after opening up a 15-point lead with seven games to play. Big-spending Interblock were still rooted to the bottom after five straight defeats. Ex-national coach Brane Oblak has returned to football after six months away, taking charge of second level Rudar Velenje.

**Zdravko Reic**

CYPRUS

### APOEL head the list

APOEL clinched the championship with three games to spare to equal Omonia's record haul of 19 titles. Coach Marinos Ouzounidis, who is in his debut season at the club, has already taken steps to maintain the team's dominance, offering new contracts to key players such as Portuguese midfielder Ricardo Fernandes and Argentinian striker Esteban Solari.

**Soulis Theodosiou**

ISRAEL

### Beitar blow Double

Beitar Jerusalem, still on course for success in the League, will not be making it a Double, having lost on penalties to outgoing champions Maccabi Haifa in the State Cup after a 1-1 draw.

Bnei Sakhnin, who have made an instant return to the top flight, celebrated by knocking out top division Maccabi Tel Aviv in the last 16 of the Cup.

**Ori Lewis**

ALBANIA

### Tirana hit trouble

SK Tirana, on course for a runaway title success, managed only 1-1 draws in successive games to allow Vllaznia to narrow the gap to just five points.

**Gezim Nushi**

MALTA

### Marsaxlokk's first title

A 1-1 draw between Sliema Wanderers and defending champions Birkirkara handed Marsaxlokk their first league title with three games to spare. "There are a lot of good players at the club but this success is definitely a collective effort," said coach Brian Talbot, the former Arsenal and England player.

Promoted sides Marsa and St George's have gone straight back down.

**Domenico Aquilina**

MONTENEGRO

# Winning start for national team

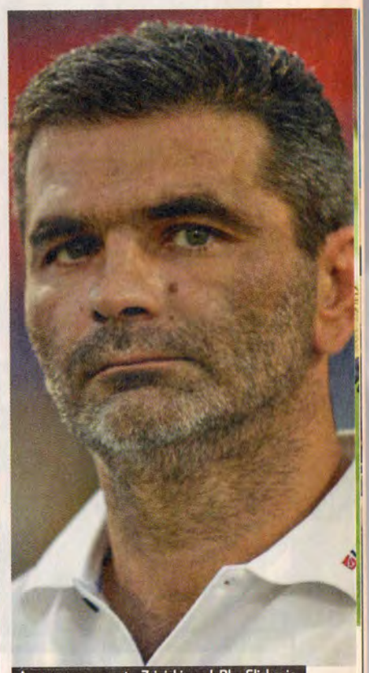
**THE NATIONAL TEAM won their first game, beating Hungary 2-1 in a friendly played in heavy rain in Podgorica on March 24. The Montenegrins conceded in the first minute but hit back with two second-half penalties, converted by Mirko Vucinic and Igor Burzanovic.**

**Montenegro will become a FIFA member in late May and the team, nicknamed the Brave Falcons, will play their first away games in early June, at the Kirin Cup in Japan, against the hosts and Colombia.**

**Branislav Milacic resigned as coach of league leaders Buducnost after two successive draws against bottom side Jedinstvo Bijelo Polje. Assistant Bozidar Vukovic took over as caretaker and celebrated a 1-0 win over biggest rivals Zeta in his first match. But Buducnost dropped two more points when held 0-0 away to Rudar Pljevlja, allowing Zeta to draw level.**

**Vladimir Novak**

Debut success...Montenegro beat Hungary 2-1 in a friendly


Anger management...Zrinjski coach Blaz Sliskovic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

# Zrinjski punished for walk-off

TITLE CHALLENGERS Zrinjski have been docked two points after coach Blaz Sliskovic called his team off the pitch because of perceived biased refereeing during a game at Orasje. The incident happened in the 83rd minute, with the hosts winning 3-2. Sliskovic was fined £1,000, and club president Ivan Beus, who reportedly ordered the former national coach to withdraw the team, has been handed a one-year ban.

However, referee Almir Alijagic and the three other match officials have also been suspended. Neutral observers claimed that Alijagic made up to 20 "uncertain" decisions against Zrinjski.

Sliskovic reacted angrily after the game, saying: "Referees are sold out as whores, journalists write what they are told and betting offices rule our football."

**Zdravko Reic**

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Winning combination...Polish FA chairman Michal Listkiewicz (left) and Ukrainian federation president Hryhorii Surkis

# United in victory

UKRAINE

IVAN FEDORENKO, the head of Ukraine's Euro 2012 bid committee, has named the three factors he believes played a major role in the country winning hosting rights, along with Poland. "The first is that the hosting of the event enjoys the support of almost 90 per cent of the people of Ukraine and Poland. The second concerns the image of Italian football after last year's match-fixing scandal, the murder of a police officer in Catania and fan rampages at the Roma v Manchester United match in the Champions League. The third is UEFA's strong belief that eastern Europe should play a bigger part in European football."

The bid was in danger of being undermined by Ukraine's deepest political crisis since independence in 1991. But the political rivals put up a united front with regard to Euro 2012, parliament passing a special law concerning the tournament's organisation, while a committee of ministers provided the necessary financial guarantees for the staging of the finals.

National coach Oleh Blokhin paid tribute to federation president Hryhorii Surkis for his efforts in uniting the country's forces behind the bid, saying: "We must build a statue to him. He started from nothing and ended as a winner."

Surkis referred to the impact the event may have on Ukraine as a whole. "This is a chance to build a new country and we will definitely not waste the opportunity," he said.

Ukraine's four finals venues will be Kiev (in line to stage the Final), Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk and Lviv. And although the country has to undertake immense infrastructural work, sports minister Viktor Korzh views the challenge positively. "Hosting Euro 2012 will accelerate the development of the Ukrainian economy," he claimed. "There are investors ready to put in up to £2billion in the construction of airports, roads, hotels and new stadiums."

However, such talk is in stark contrast to the current financial state of domestic football. On the day of the bid win, Kyiv Dynamo reported losses of £4million for 2006 while Arsenal, another capital club, were declared bankrupt.

Oleg Zadernovsky

POLAND

THE COUNTRY HAS been riding a wave of euphoria since it won co-hosting rights. Poland and Liverpool keeper Jerzy Dudek described the victory as "the third Polish miracle since the Second World War, along with the election of Pope John Paul II and the collapse of Communism".

The idea of staging the tournament was derided by Poles at the start because of the poor transport infrastructure and lack of adequate stadiums and hotels. But FA chairman Michal Listkiewicz promised that all the necessary facilities could be built and that the finals would be a major boost for the country as a whole. He said: "Such a tournament can be a milestone for our football and economy. It was the same with Portugal before Euro 2004. Their success with that tournament should be an inspiration."

Poland will stage matches at four cities – Warsaw, Gdansk, Poznan and Wroclaw.

The country's match-fixing scandal, which had looked as if it might scupper the bid, has had further repercussions. Top-flight clubs Arka Gdynia and Gornik Leczna and second division sides Gornik Polkowice and KSZO Ostrowiec will be demoted for their part in the affair. Arka will start with minus five points in the second division next term and Gornik Leczna, the only club of the four to deny the accusations, will kick off in the third division with minus ten points. Both Gornik Polkowice and KSZO will also play in the third tier.

Dariusz Kurowski





ROMANIA

### Dinamo's big-three bonanza

Dinamo Bucharest, the runaway leaders, have become the first of the country's big three clubs to beat their two rivals both home and away in the same league season. The sequence was completed with a 4-1 win at Rapid Bucharest, Claudiu Niculescu scoring all Dinamo's goals. "To win any game is most important, but to beat Steaua and Rapid home and away is really to fulfil a dream," said coach Mircea Rednic, who formerly led Rapid.

All the big three clubs have been ordered to play home games behind closed doors because of hooliganism. Rapid were hit with a three-game penalty, Steaua two and Dinamo one.

Radu Timofte

BULGARIA

### Stoilov fills in

Stanimir Stoilov, the coach of league leaders Levski Sofia, has taken temporary charge of the national team following the departure of Hristo Stoichkov. Stoilov will oversee two games – the home-and-away European qualifiers against Belarus in June – with a full-time appointment to be made in the summer. He agreed to take the reins after Grasshopper coach and former international Krassimir Balakov turned down the position because he is in demand by several German clubs.

Stoichkov stepped down after Bulgaria were held 0-0 at home by Albania on March 28. He then signed a deal to coach Celta Vigo, with whom he had reportedly started negotiations in February.

Levski took a big step towards retaining the league title when beating CSKA Sofia 1-0 in the "eternal" derby.

Rumen Paytashev

MOLDOVA

### Covalciuc takes citizenship gamble

International midfielder Serghei Covalciuc has renounced his Moldovan passport and taken Russian citizenship in the hope that it will get him more games for his club side, Spartak Moscow. The Russian League allows teams a maximum seven foreign players on the pitch at any one time, and Spartak have a dozen first-team squad members from abroad. The 25-year-old hopes still to be able to play for Moldova.

Miron Goihman

HUNGARY

### Debrecen close in

Debrecen took another step towards retaining the league title when convincingly beating Diosgyor 5-1 away. That kept them five points clear of MTK, the only remaining challengers after Ujpest were held 0-0 at home by Kaposvar, with five rounds to play.

Peterjon Cresswell

BELARUS

### First Cup for Naftan

Naftan Novopolotsk beat FC Vitebsk 3-0 in the Cup Final to win the trophy for the first time.

Petr Kachuro was sacked as Dinamo Minsk coach and replaced by Alexander Khatskevich, who will be player-coach.

Oleg Zadernovsky

CZECH REPUBLIC

## Bruckner stays on despite scandal

Strain game...under-fire Bruckner

NATIONAL TEAM COACH Karel Bruckner has received the FA's backing in the aftermath of a scandal involving his players.

In the early hours of the morning after the Czechs' 2-1 home defeat by Germany in the Euro 2008 qualifiers in March, five players – Tomas Rosicky, Tomas Ujfalusi, Jan Polak, Martin Jiranek and Marek Cech – were photographed at the team's Prague hotel in the company of six alleged prostitutes.

The quintet, who were celebrating Ujfalusi's 29th birthday, later denied that the women had visited their rooms and, somewhat implausibly, said that they had merely been discussing the Germany game. The squad were collectively fined £24,400, and a shaken Bruckner admitted he had considered resigning over the affair.

An unconvincing 1-0 win over Cyprus, four days later in Liberec, did little to improve the coach's standing. However, national team manager Vlastimil Kostal, speaking after a meeting of officials, said the coach's position was not under discussion.

In the domestic title race, the top three were separated by just a point with six games remaining. Sparta Prague leapfrogged city rivals Slavia to take top spot with a 1-0 win in the derby, which was preceded by a minute's silence for Sparta great Andrej Kvasnak, who died aged 70 following a battle with lung cancer. The forward was a member of the Czechoslovakia team that reached the 1962 World Cup Final.

Sam Beckwith

Derby tussle...Semak and CSKA's Vagner Love

RUSSIA

## Semak's sweet revenge

FC MOSCOW, the capital's youngest and least renowned top division club, continued their fine start to the season by beating city rivals and defending champions CSKA 2-1 at home in the sixth round. The result kept them joint top, along with Spartak Moscow, with CSKA slipping to third.

Former CSKA midfielder Sergei Semak hit the winner, which drew applause from the visiting fans, a remarkable event even though he had been a favourite at the Army club. The supporters' reaction prompted a bitter reaction from CSKA keeper Igor Akinfeev. "They call themselves our supporters but cheer the opponents' goal," he said.

The strike was sweet revenge for Semak, the FC Moscow captain, who had been rejected by CSKA on his return to Russia from a spell at Paris Saint-Germain two years ago.

Victor Gusev

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BRAZIL

# Ageing process

TWO PLAYERS with an age difference of 24 years will be the centre of attention when the Brazilian championship kicks off on May 12.

Seventeen-year-old Internacional striker Alexandre Pato is the big promise for the future, and Brazilians are hoping that they will be able to enjoy his talents for a while before he is snapped up by a big European club. If Alex The Duck does live up to his billing, he will add some badly-needed sparkle to a tournament that last year was won at a canter by Sao Paulo.

At the other end of the age scale, Romario, 41, will begin the competition on a career tally of 999 goals, according to his own calculations, with their rather dubious criteria. The general desire is for Shortie to quickly notch his "1,000th" to finally get the saga over with, make a dignified exit and let his club, Vasco da Gama, get on with the task in hand.

As usual, it is difficult to make predictions about the championship, not least because a number of squads are usually decimated during the European close season in June and July. Also, the domestic transfer window remains open until two-thirds of the way through the campaign.

### The favourites

Defending champions SAO PAULO have lost playmaker Danilo, stopper Mineiro and central defender Fabao but free-kick and penalty-scoring keeper Rogerio Ceni is still there, as is coach Muricy Ramalho. In terms of infrastructure, the club remain one of Brazil's strongest, while they are physically imposing on the field, the team awash with six-footers.

SANTOS coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo, who led the club to their last title in 2004 before his unhappy 11 months with Real Madrid, is attempting to win the competition for a sixth time. Santos made an excellent start to the year in the Libertadores Cup and Paulista state championship, with former Bayern Munich midfielder Ze Roberto in inspired form after being given a free role and the number 10 shirt. Left-back Kleber, another player repatriated from Germany, and forward Marcos Aurelio are also ones to watch, while keeper Fabio Costa remains an intimidating presence.

INTERNACIONAL, the world club champions, had a miserable start to the year and coach Abel Braga resigned to take up an offer from Europe. However, the poor results stemmed largely from the fact that they had not recovered properly from the Club World Cup. Now, having had time for a proper break, the Porto Alegre side should be a different proposition.

ATLETICO MINEIRO, Belo Horizonte's most popular team, are back after a season in the second division. Coach Levir Culpi has a good track record – he led Atletico Paranaense to the runners-up spot in 2004 – the club have a fanatical support, and the momentum from last year's campaign could be crucial.

### The others

The other three promoted sides are all from the north-east – AMERICA from Natal and Recife pair SPORT and NAUTICO. Atletico Mineiro's city rivals, CRUZEIRO, have been in a perpetual slumber since winning the 2003 title, apparently content to hover around in mid-table. Their chances of an improvement this year looked good after the appointment of Paulo Autuori, who was at the helm when they won the Libertadores Cup in 1997. Autuori drafted in several players from the youth team but then resigned after a 4-0 drubbing by Atletico Mineiro when his team appeared not to be trying.

GREMIO, Internacional's arch-rivals, have enjoyed two excellent seasons under coach Mano Menezes, winning promotion from the second division in 2005 and finishing third last year. Midfielder Lucas, 20, is one of Brazil's big revelations of the past year.

CORINTHIANS, who narrowly avoided relegation last term, look set to struggle again. The flood of investment from partner MSI has been reduced to a trickle, the club's financial problems are back, and the turnover of players and coaches remains truly absurd. Emerson Leao, who saved them from the drop, was fired. His replacement is former Paraguay coach Paulo Cesar Carpegiani.

The outlook is brighter at Sao Paulo neighbours PALMEIRAS, whose coach, Caio Junior, led Parana to the Libertadores Cup for the first time. In Chile's talented, if theatrical, Jorge Valdivia, they have a classic South American number 10, a real rarity now.

PARANA also lost several players to Palmeiras but have recovered well, reaching the last 16 of the Libertadores under former Brazil goalkeeper Zetti.

ATLETICO PARANAENSE, Parana's neighbours, had an indifferent campaign last year and although they have kept faith with coach Oswaldo Alvarez, remain an unknown quantity. The same goes for two of the other southern clubs, FIGUEIRENSE (from Florianopolis) and JUVENTUDE (Caxais do Sul). Juventude have kept coach Ivo Wortmann, while Figueirense have changed coaches twice in recent months. Mario Sergio is currently in the hot seat. GOIAS, from the centre-west, have kept coach Geninho and become the fifth Brazilian club for veteran Serbian midfielder Dejan Petkovic.

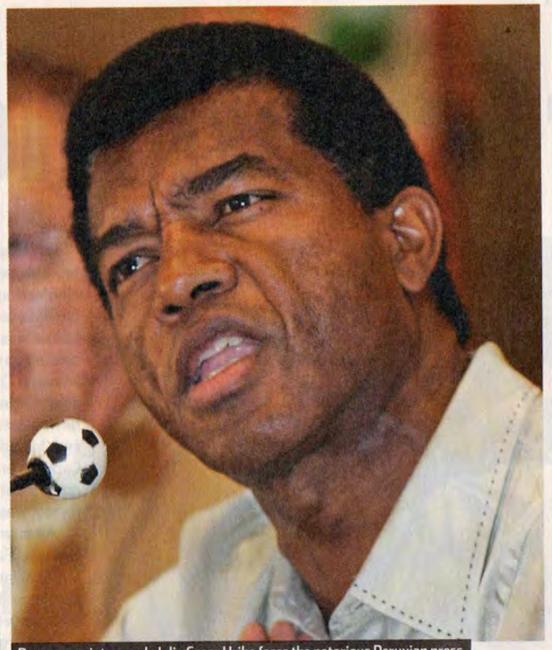
In Rio de Janeiro, FLAMENGO have finally found some stability after years of turmoil. Coach Ney Franco has completed one year at the helm (the longest tenure since Mario Zagallo in 2000-01) and midfielder Renato Augusto is one of the best players to come out of the youth set-up in years. But the fans are notoriously fickle.

BOTAFOGO are optimistic, while VASCO DA GAMA's season may depend on how quickly they can get Romario's 1,000th goal out of the way. FLUMINENSE, who signed 17 players at the start of the year, are still in a state of pandemonium. Coaches Paulo Cesar Gusmao and Joel Santana have both been fired since January. Renato Portaluppi is the latest in the hot seat.

**Brian Homewood**

On his last legs?...the feeling is that once Vasco's Romario has scored his "1,000th" goal, he should make a dignified exit

Hot prospect...Gremio's Lucas



Pressure point...coach Julio Cesar Uribe faces the notorious Peruvian press

PERU

# Uribe fined after post-defeat drink

**NEWLY-APPOINTED national team coach Julio Cesar Uribe has been given an early taste of what he can expect in one of the most high-pressure jobs on the continent. Uribe was fined 30 per cent of a month's wages after Peru's notoriously intrusive tabloids gleefully made a scandal of the fact that he went out for a drink following the 2-0 friendly defeat away to Japan in his first match in charge.**

**"We were not bothered about Uribe going out after the Japan game; what annoyed us was that he denied it," said general manager Juvenal Silva. Uribe is going to have to learn quickly how to deal with the so-called Chicha press, *chicha* being the ubiquitous term for cheap booze of dubious quality. The players repeatedly complain that they are stalked by the tabloids, who will happily turn a quiet visit to a restaurant into stories of all-night drinking binges.**

**The Sport Ancash saga finally seems to have ended after the federation announced that the club would be allowed to play on in the top flight after all. Confusion arose when the federation's disciplinary tribunal ruled that Ancash had fielded an ineligible player during the 2006 championship and docked them four points, which condemned them to relegation.**

**However, the club had already played seven games of this year's campaign, and rather than re-programme the whole championship, the federation announced an amnesty for Ancash. The other clubs eventually accepted the decision by a narrow margin, though Coronel Bolognesi, who had voted against the amnesty, boycotted their tie against Ancash in protest and had it awarded 2-0 against them.**

**Brian Homewood**

BOLIVIA

# Damages limitation

THE PRESIDENT of Bolivar, the country's most successful team, spent three days in prison after the club failed to obey a court order and pay damages to former coach Luis Orozco. Mauro Cuellar said he was bitter and hurt by his experience in La Paz's San Pedro jail. "I'm paying for my love of Bolivar," he said.

Cuellar was released after the League guaranteed to use money from television rights to pay the £26,000 owed to Orozco, who was fired in 2000. The club, who have won 18 national league titles, have also been sued by former players Carlos Borja and Miguel Angel Rimba and by ex-coaches Victor Barrientos and Carlos Aragones. They owe a total of nearly £100,000. "Bolivar haven't had that sort of money for a long time," Cuellar said.

Cuellar has been president since 1999, during which time they have won four league titles, reached the Libertadores Cup quarter-finals and the Sudamericana Cup Final.

Just before Cuellar was jailed, coach Victor Hugo Antelo was fired following group-stage elimination in the Libertadores. "Tomorrow, I'll be at home in peace and quiet and the chaos at the club will continue," Antelo said. His replacement is former international defender Marco Sandy.

**Brian Homewood**

PARAGUAY

# Big fallers

Big clubs Cerro Porteno and Olimpia both changed coaches. Argentina's Gustavo Costas resigned at the former after they exited at the group stage of the Libertadores Cup. He was replaced by Brazil's Valdir Espinoza, now in his third stint at the club.

Jose Cardozo walked out on Olimpia after hearing that the club wanted to bring in Alicio Solalinde as a co-coach. Solalinde has now taken sole charge. "Nobody is going to tell me who I'm going to work with," was the angry response of Cardozo, 36. "I'm still new to this career but the fact I'm young doesn't mean I don't have principles."

**Brian Homewood**

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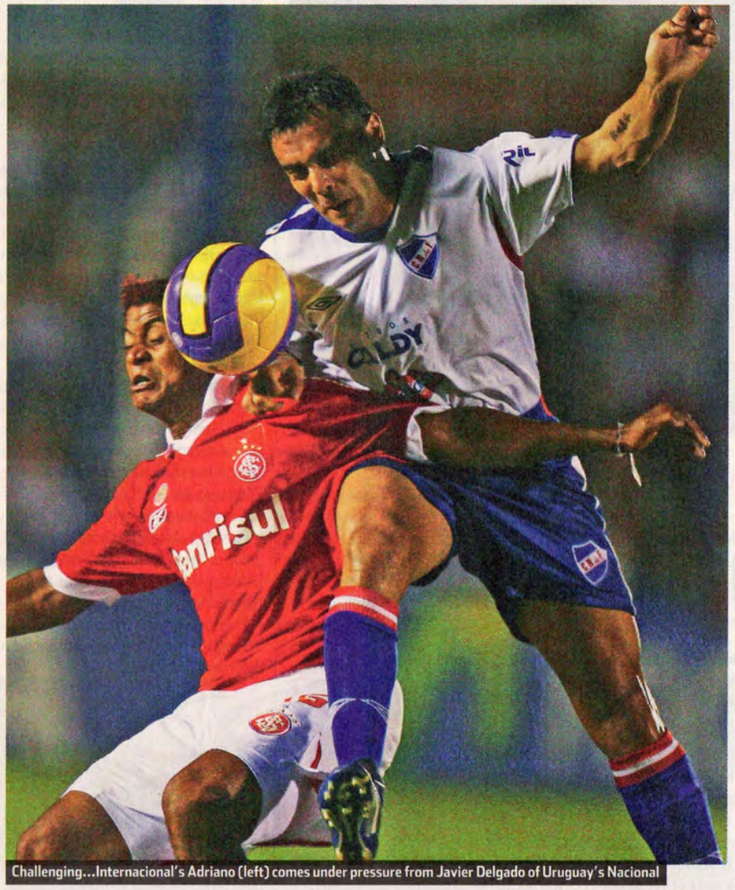
LIBERTADORES CUP

# Inter fall off the top


Challenging...Internacional's Adriano (left) comes under pressure from Javier Delgado of Uruguay's Nacional

WORLD CLUB champions Internacional could not find a place in the last 16 of the Libertadores Cup. The Brazilian side gave a perfect illustration of the adage that reaching the top is one thing, but staying there is quite another.

In fairness, Internacional's achievements last year were remarkable for a provincial club whose business model is based on continually selling their best players. There comes a point, though, when a player is sold who cannot immediately be replaced. Inter reached it when they lost centre-back Fabiano Eller, the organiser of the defence. Without him they fell to hefty away defeats to the two eventual qualifiers – Nacional of Uruguay (3-1) and Velez Sarsfield of Argentina (3-0) – which proved decisive as they exited on goal difference.

That aside, the group phase was a triumph for Brazil, with its other five representatives all making it into the knockout stages. There were nervy moments for Gremio, who needed a late goal to survive, and Sao Paulo, who came under pressure against Audax Italiano. The tiny Chilean club, in their debut campaign, played some excellent football and were the most pleasant surprise of the group phase. But Sao Paulo forced them out on goal difference.

The other Brazilian sides had an easy ride. Santos and Flamengo sailed through, and Parana came second to Flamengo, showing the strength in depth of the domestic game; after just squeezing into their first Libertadores campaign in December, Parana lost their coach and leading players, but regrouped quickly.

In contrast, three of Argentina's five representatives fell by the wayside. The elimination of Banfield and Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata came as little surprise, but River Plate's failure was sensational, especially as they opened up with a win away to the eventual group winners, Colo Colo. By the time the teams met again in the final round River were already out, having drawn twice with Ecuador's LDU Quito and, incredibly, lost home and away against Caracas, only the second Venezuelan side to make it out of the group phase since the current format was adopted in 2000.

An injury to promising Colombian striker Radamel Falcao Garcia was part of River's problem, as were the disappointing displays of Fernando Belluschi, the key creative midfield force since the sale of Marcelo Gallardo.

The Argentinian contingent would soon be reduced to one, with Boca Juniors and Velez Sarsfield meeting in the second round, pitting Miguel Angel Russo and Ricardo Lavolpe against the sides they coached last year.

Lavolpe's former stamping ground, Mexico, showed the force of its football as all three sides qualified, Toluca and Necaxa topping their group and free-scoring America coming second to the once again impressive Libertad of Paraguay.

Both Uruguayan teams also made it into the knockout stages, but Defensor Sporting like Nacional only crept through on goal difference.

Cucuta of Colombia, who complete the last 16 line-up, qualified in remarkable fashion. They drew their first three games and lost their fourth, at which point they trailed compatriots Tolima, who had a game in hand, by four points. Tolima lost their next two matches, but a draw in their final fixture, at home to Cucuta, would have been good enough. Tolima were 3-2 ahead deep in the second half, but two late goals from dangerous Panamanian centre-forward Blas Perez sent Cucuta through.

Perez was second top scorer in the group phase, with five, one behind America's neat Paraguayan striker Salvador Cabanas, who also notched three goals in the preliminary round.

For the seventh successive year there is no Bolivian representation in the knockout stages, and no team from Peru for the third consecutive year. More surprising was the wipeout suffered by Ecuador; this can be seen, paradoxically, as a consequence of the country's development. Last year's World Cup success put Ecuadorean football in the spotlight as never before and placed the top players in the shop window. Many of the national team have since moved abroad, and the domestic game has felt their absence.

**Tim Vickery**





ECUADOR

### Luna the loser in smuggling scandal

National team co-ordinator Vinicio Luna, who spent a year in prison for his part in a human smuggling ring, was reinstated following his release but resigned two weeks later after a huge public outcry. "He did not want to be a stone in the federation's shoe," said a federation statement.

Luna, a retired army officer, was remanded in custody last year after public prosecutors alleged he helped applicants for United States visas by falsely stating they were members of the national team delegation. He was found guilty in March and sentenced to a year in prison but was then released because the court ruled he had already served the term while awaiting trial.

**Brian Homewood**

CHILE

### Grounds for concern

The poor state of the country's stadiums has come under the spotlight. Firstly, a plague of termites destroyed some of the seating at O'Higgins' ground in Rancagua, prompting their match against Universidad de Chile to be postponed. Then, FIFA said it would rule out the use of both the Nacional and Monumental stadiums in Santiago as World Cup qualifying venues if they were not brought up to scratch by August.

**Brian Homewood**

CANADA

### Toronto's debut downer

Toronto FC had a miserable start in Major League Soccer, losing all their first three games, against Chivas USA, New England Revolution and Kansas City Wizards, without scoring.

New signings include defender Marvell Wynne from New York Red Bulls and English forward Danny Dichio from Preston.

"It's a move I've wanted to make for the last few years now," Dichio said. "My wife is American, so we wanted to come over and live here, as well as play in MLS. It's not like a holiday trip like some English players who come and play over here."

**Philippe Germain**

UNITED STATES

# Blanco lights Fire

IN JANUARY, David Beckham agreed to join Los Angeles Galaxy but there was disappointment for those expecting the other 12 MLS clubs to quickly follow the lead in signing a top player outside the League's rather stingy salary cap.

Then, suddenly, in April four internationally known players signed up, the most exciting of which is undoubtedly Cuauhtemoc Blanco. The Mexican striker, currently playing for the America club, will join Chicago Fire in July at the end of the Mexican closing championship on a two-year contract.

Blanco has already visited the city, and 5,000 fans turned up for a quickly arranged appearance at a Fire training session. Most of the supporters were Mexican-Americans, and that is the whole point of the signing. Already Blanco, 34, is being dubbed the "Mexican Beckham" for his perceived ability to increase the gates at games.

As with the Beckham deal, only the first £200,000 of Blanco's salary counts against the cap. The rest is paid by Fire's owner – Phil Anschutz's AEG company, which also owns Galaxy.

New York Red Bulls claimed that Juan Pablo Angel was the player they had wanted all along – implausible, since their search for a striker had led them to make increasingly desperate approaches to Ecuadorean Agustin Delgado, Brazilian Edmundo and Frenchman Djibril Cisse before securing the Colombian international from Aston Villa.

Columbus Crew coach Sigi Schmid pulled off a remarkable deal by bringing in Boca Juniors stalwart Guillermo Barros Schelotto on a two-year deal. The 34-year-old's playmaking and scoring abilities should help Crew, who had the MLS's lowest goal tally last year.

The fourth signing was another Argentinian with Boca connections, Carlos Marinelli, for Kansas City Wizards from Sporting Braga. Marinelli has also played for Middlesbrough and Torino in Europe.

**Paul Gardner**

Mexican rave...Blanco signs shirts and programmes for eager Chicago Fire fans

Personal problems...Nery Castillo

MEXICO

# Is Castillo worth the hassle?

MEXICO ARE continuing to chase the services of Nery Castillo but many are now questioning whether it is worth the effort after the Olympiakos forward missed friendlies against Paraguay and Ecuador because of personal problems.

Castillo, also wanted by Greece, where he has played since he was 16, and Uruguay, where he was raised, was picked by national team coach Hugo Sanchez but then failed to make the trip to the United States for the games.

Former striker Carlos Hermosillo was among the sceptics. "I don't know why we're chasing this lad. He and his father are toying with Mexican football," he said. "If he doesn't want to play, we don't need to go looking for him. We have excellent players here but we don't give them the importance they deserve."

**Brian Homewood**

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Bleak outlook...sacked Iraq coach Akram Salman

ASIAN CUP

# Salman excommunicated

**IRAQ FIRED COACH Akram Salman just three months before the Asian Cup finals in the wake of the team's failure to progress beyond the group stage at the Gulf Cup in January. After an investigation into the debacle, the federation cited his poor communication with the players as the reason for Iraq's early exit.**

**Salman, who had been in charge for two years, is the fifth coach to lose his job with an Asian Cup qualifying country since the finals draw was made in December.**

**Oman, who ousted Milan Macala in February, have appointed Argentinian Gabriel Calderon, a former Saudi Arabia boss, to oversee their campaign in the 16-team event.**

**Macala will get his chance at the Asian Cup, however, after taking the reins of Bahrain, who fired German Hans-Pieter Briegel in January.**

**Saudi Arabia, who fired Marcos Paqueta – Calderon's successor – in March, and co-hosts Indonesia are the other Asian Cup finalists to go for a change of coach.**

**Michael Church**

JAPAN

### Gamba's turn to lead in topsy-turvy start

Double winners Urawa Reds were the last team to lose their unbeaten league record when going down 2-1 at home to Kawasaki Frontale in the seventh round. It was Reds' first home defeat since September 2005 and it enabled Gamba Osaka to go top of the table. The 2005 champions did it in style, thrashing Jubilo Iwata 5-2.

However, top spot has been a hot potato so far, with a new leader after virtually every round. Reds had gone top after a 2-0 defeat of leaders Kashiwa Reysol the previous weekend, when the other three teams above the champions also lost.

Despite that defeat, promoted Reysol have impressed so far. The team includes two Olympic team players – Minoru Suganuma, who scored four goals in his first four league games this season, and Tadanari Ri, a naturalised Korean striker.

The quality of Reysol's scouting set-up has also been proven by the outstanding performances of previously little-known Yohei Kurakawa. The midfielder, signed from non-league FC Horikoshi, also scored a candidate for goal of the season, away at Ventforet Kofu.

**Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae**





ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Frontale assault

KAWASAKI FRONTALE were on the verge of ending Japan's Champions League hoodoo by virtually sealing their place in the quarter-finals with a 3-0 win over Chunnam Dragons on matchday four of the group stage.

No J.League side had reached the last eight since the tournament's inception in 2002 but the defeat of the Korean FA Cup holders meant Frontale, last year's J.League runners-up, appeared certain to progress as group winners, even if they lost both their remaining games – against Indonesia's Arema Malang and Bangkok University of Thailand.

Japanese champions Urawa Reds were on course to make it a double, though the situation in their group was much tighter, leading by a point from Sydney FC, with Indonesia's Persik Kediri a further point back.

Only the group winners qualify for the quarter-finals. Even so, two other clubs had virtually booked their place with two games to spare – China's Shandong Luneng, who had won all four matches, and Al Wahda of the United Arab Emirates.

On the coaching front, Al Hilal have reappointed former Saudi national team boss Marcos Paqueta following the sacking of Brazilian compatriot Toninho Cerezo after a run of poor domestic results.

**Michael Church**

Take that!...Kawasaki Frontale's Kengo Nakamura fires in a free-kick during the 3-0 defeat of Chunnam Dragons

NEW ZEALAND

### Hat-trick for Auckland

Auckland City won their third successive championship with a 3-2 defeat of regular season winners Waitakere United in the Grand Final.

Liam Mulrooney put City ahead after 15 minutes with a sweetly struck volley, but Waitakere levelled six minutes later after a goalkeeping blunder. Ross Nicholson, attempting to clear a back pass on the edge of his area, knocked the ball against opposing striker Commins Menapi and could merely watch as it rolled into the net.

However, Menapi's luck ran out a few minutes later when he was sent off for an over-the-top foul.

Paul Urlovic put City back in front five minutes into the second half, with captain Neil Sykes extending the lead in the 77th minute. Jeff Campbell hit Waitakere's second in injury-time.

The national team suffered heavy defeats in both their Latin American tour games, against Costa Rica (4-0) and Venezuela (5-0).

**Paul Moon**

And another...Auckland keep the trophy

AUSTRALIA

### Socceroos' Chinese takeaway

While club sides Sydney FC and Adelaide United have stuttered in Australia's inaugural season in Asian competition, the national team have quickly established themselves as a force on the continent. The Socceroos beat China 2-0 in Guangzhou in a friendly in March despite fielding a severely depleted team. Brett Holman and Marco Bresciano scored the goals, both in the first half.

Internazionale midfielder Carl Valeri and Lillestrom defender Shane Stefanutto both made impressive debuts.

**Paul Moon**

## ROUND-UP

### ASIA

● IRANIAN champions Esteghlal of Tehran had their lead cut to two points with four rounds to play after a 1-0 loss at fourth-placed Sepahan. Esteghlal Ahvaz, who had a game in hand on the leaders, leapfrogged Saipa into second with a 3-1 home defeat of lowly Pas.

● Muharraq clinched the BAHRAINI league title in style, thrashing Bahrain FC 6-0 in the third last round to take a 10-point lead on closest challengers Al Rifaa. Brazilian striker Rico hit a hat-trick, while goalkeeper Ali Hassan also got on the scoresheet from the penalty spot.

● In INDIA, Dempo went three points clear in the League after a thrilling 5-3 defeat of East Bengal. Mahindra United were second, with East Bengal four points further back.

**Azam Mahmood**

### OCEANIA

● Ba thrashed Suva 7-3 on aggregate to win FIJI'S Champions v Champions Series for a remarkable 14th consecutive time.

● NEW CALEDONIA'S championship play-offs kicked off with an astonishing 6-6 draw between outer islands' representatives Jeunesse Wedrumel, from Lifou, and 2005 champions Magenta.

**Paul Moon**

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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Northern stronghold

Tilt at title...Al Ahly's Mohamed Barakat (left) clashes with Oscar Ntwagae of Mamelodi Sundowns

SEVEN OF THE eight teams in the group stage of the Champions League come from north Africa, reflecting the region's return to pre-eminence on the continent after ceding ground to the south and west.

ASEC Abidjan of Ivory Coast are the only survivors from south of the Sahara as they made it to the league stage for a record eighth time in 11 years. But they now face the daunting task of challenging the surge of clubs from the Arabic-speaking countries, which has stemmed from better organisation and bigger budgets.

The charge is again led by Egypt's Al Ahly, who are seeking an unprecedented third straight title. The Cairo club, celebrating their centenary, showed their superior class in the last 16, overcoming South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns 4-2 on aggregate.

Key midfielder Mohamed Barakat helped Ahly to the victory after recovering from a long-term knee problem. The return of forward Mohamed Aboutraika, another absentee through injury, will also boost the champions ahead of the group stage, which kicks off in June.

Tunisia provides two of the strongest challengers – Etoile Sahel and Esperance. The other qualifiers are Morocco's FAR Rabat, Algeria's JS Kabylie, Al Ittihad of Libya and Sudan's Al Hilal. It is the first time the latter two countries have had a group-stage representative.

**Mark Gleeson**

## ROUND-UP

● CONGO's national team coach Noel Tosi was fired after an altercation with the country's sports minister. Marcel Mbani had attempted to enter the dressing room at half-time of the Nations Cup qualifier against Zambia in Brazzaville in March to admonish the players for failing to score. The game ended 0-0. Tosi, a Frenchman, was appointed last July on a two-year contract. His replacement is his predecessor, Gaston Tchangana.

● Jean Marie Ntagwabira, who led RWANDA'S APR FC in last year's African Champions League, has been named coach of the Atraco club, replacing Ugandan Sam Ssimbwa.

● Veteran Argentinian coach Luis Oscar Fullone has returned to MOROCCO, taking charge of Maghreb Fes.

● Taha Basri has quit as coach of EGYPTIAN club Arab Contractors after a string of poor results. His replacement is Alaa Nabit, a former coach of the country's Under-17 side.

● Frenchman Jean-Paul Rossingnol lasted just one game as coach of MADAGASCAR, a 3-0 home defeat by Ivory Coast in the Nations Cup qualifiers. Herve Arsene has taken over on a caretaker basis.

● Former ANGOLA international Fusso Nkossi has been fired as coach of club side Primeiro Maio.

● Masvingo United beat Highlanders 3-0 in ZIMBABWE'S Independence Trophy Final. Goalkeeper Tafadzwa Dube scored with a free-kick.

● In SOUTH AFRICA, Tony de Nobrega quit as coach of Premier League Bloemfontein Celtic after receiving death threats following defeat to Ajax Cape Town in a cup tie.

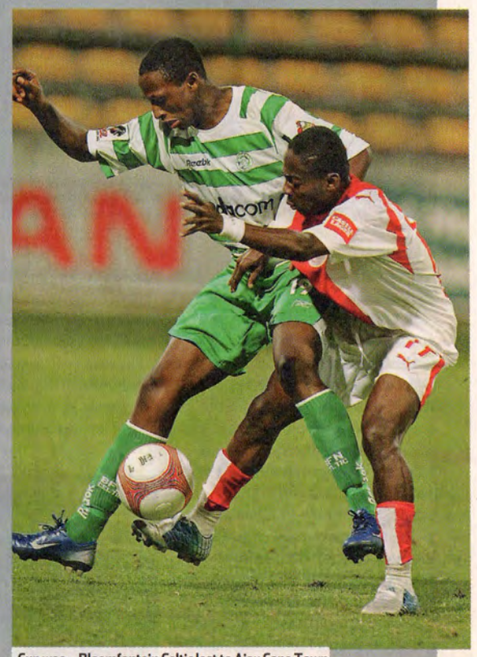
● Hearts of Oak, coached by Bulgarian Mitko Kostadinov Dobrez, won the League in GHANA with a game to spare.

● BURKINA FASO sacked coach Idrissa Traore after the team were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Mozambique in the Nations Cup qualifiers.

● Spaniard Jose Martinez is the new coach of GAMBIA. The former Zaragoza player replaces Antoine Hey, who quit after claiming he was owed money.

● Larbi Mehnane, goalkeeper for ALGERIAN club Mouloudia Oran from 1960 to 1970, has died aged 68 in Strasbourg.

**Mark Gleeson**



Cup woe...Bloemfontein Celtic lost to Ajax Cape Town

Lost in France...Monaco's "national" team pose outside the Cap d'Ail stadium at which they stage "home" games

# Matter of principality

IT IS A GREAT football anomaly that Monaco is home to one of the strongest clubs in the French League and indeed Europe, but has a purely amateur "national" team who are not entitled to compete in UEFA events and have never played a game on home soil.

The principality is a member of the United Nations – one of the main criteria for membership of UEFA – but, in fact, it has never applied to join, precisely because club side AS Monaco, Champions League finalists in 2004, are such a powerful force.

Seven years ago, Monaco did not even have a national side and ASM were hardly representative of the principality either, since there were few locals in the squad. So a group of Monegasque amateur players decided to establish a side. The Federation Monegasque de Football was formed, with one of the prime movers being Christian Michelis, who has gone on to become president of the New Federation Board for non-FIFA members. But the principality is no closer to membership of UEFA or FIFA.

Prince Albert, Monaco's head of state, is a renowned football fan, so the national side's fortunes should be bright, but ASM's power in the principality is so strong that while the FMF is accepted, it is not recognised by the Monegasque government. Christoph North, the FMF general secretary, says: "Our difficulty in being recognised is AS Monaco. The government fear that ASM would be excluded from the French League if a Monaco football federation 'exists'. We have tried to have discussions with the French federation and the French League, but failed to get guarantees that ASM would not be excluded."

The national team played their first game in July 2001, beating Tibet 2-1 in Freiburg in Germany. In 2002, the FMF invited Gibraltar to the principality, with the intention of playing them at ASM's 18,500-capacity Stade Louis II stadium – the only proper arena in Monaco. But the game was cancelled because of opposition from the club and government.

Although Monaco have never played on home soil, they have staged games just over the French border in Cap d'Ail. The first was a 2-2 draw with Gibraltar in February 2002. Cap d'Ail remains the "home" ground, but fixtures are not easy to set up. Early last year, a game against the representative team of Northern Cyprus, which is recognised as an independent state only by Turkey, was cancelled after Greek Cyprus put pressure on the Monegasque government. "Despite all the games we have played, our government still does not recognise us as a real federation," North says. "But some sponsors and organisations are with us."

There have also been mixed fortunes on the pitch in the past 12 months. In April last year, Monaco were thrashed 7-1 by Kosovo at Cap d'Ail. In last November's Viva World Cup, organised by the NF Board, Monaco reached the Final by beating the more fancied Occitania (representing the people in southern France who still speak the Oc language) 3-2 in the last group game. However, they were hammered 21-1 by an experienced Sapmi team, representing Lapland.

A game away to Occitania is arranged for June 23, but the national team's future remains in the balance until the French federation assures ASM that they will be allowed to stay in Ligue 1 if the FMF get government clearance to apply for UEFA membership.

**Steve Menary**

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums
worldsoccer.com

# INTERNATIONALS

## FRIENDLIES

**Wednesday, April 4**
*Apr 4 - Cabinda*
**Angola 0**
**Congo 0**

**Tuesday, April 17**
*Apr 17 - San Salvador*
**El Salvador 0**
**Haiti 1** (Noncent 90)
**HT:** 0-0

**Wednesday, April 18**
*Apr 18 - Mendoza*
**Argentina 0**
**Chile 0**
**Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
**Argentina:** Carrizo - Ibarra, Tuzzio, Diaz, Bottinelli, Belluschi (Ponzio 81), C Ledesma, Sosa (P Ledesma 81), Montenegro (Cardozo 62), Palacio (Lavezzi 62), Pavone.
**Chile:** Pinto - Rieloff, Riffo, Roco, Vidal, Iturra (Medel 62), Sanhueza, Fierro, Valdivia, Suazo, Sanchez (Moya 73).

**Thursday, April 19**
*Apr 19 - La Ceiba*
**Honduras 1** (Pavon pen 4)
**Haiti 3** (Boucicaut 40, Cadet 69, Germain 77)
**HT:** 1-1

**Tuesday, April 24**
*Apr 24 - Victoria*
**Seychelles 2** (Dufresne 25, Zialor 40)
**Reunion 0**
**HT:** 2-0

**Thursday, April 26**
*Apr 26 - Curepipe*
**Mauritius 1** (Hovas 90)
**Reunion 1** (Malick 27)
**HT:** 0-1

## AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

**Group 10**
*Apr 29 - Kinshasa*
**DR Congo 2** (Mbungu 25, Lua Lua pen 57)
**Ethiopia 0**
**HT:** 1-0

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DR Congo | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 7 |
| Libya | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Namibia | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Ethiopia | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 |

## COSAFA CASTLE CUP

**Group A**
*In Maputo, Mozambique*

### Semi-finals
*Apr 28*
**Mozambique 2** (Bino 51, 77)
**Seychelles 0**
**HT:** 0-0

*Apr 28*
**Madagascar 0**
**Zimbabwe 1** (Nkata 8)
**HT:** 0-1

### Third-place play-off
*Apr 29*
**Madagascar 5** (Voavy 11, 14, 69, Ramiadamanana 61, Andriatsima 84)
**Seychelles 0**
**HT:** 2-0

### Final
*Apr 29*
**Mozambique 0**
**Zimbabwe 0**
*Mozambique 5-4 on pens*

*Mozambique qualify for semi-finals*

## EAST ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

### Preliminary round
*Mar 25 - Saipan*
**Northern Mariana Islands 2** (McDonald 57, 75)
**Guam 3** (Jamison 9, Pangelinan 65, 78)
**HT:** 0-1

*Apr 1 - Harmon*
**Guam 9** (Pangelinan 5, Mendoza, Merfalen, Jamison, Calvo)
**Northern Mariana Islands 0**
*Guam 12-2 on agg*

*Guam enter qualifying pools, along with Hong Kong, Macao, Mongolia, North Korea and Taiwan, to be played in Macao from June 17-24, 2007. Finals take place in February 2008, in China*

# CLUB FOOTBALL EUROPE

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

### Quarter-finals, 1st legs
*Apr 3*
**Milan (Ita) 2** (Pirlo 40, Kaka pen 84)
**Bayern Munich (Ger) 2** (Van Buyten 78, 90)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 67,500. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)
**Milan:** Dida - Oddo, Nesta, Maldini, Jankulovski (Kaladze 87), Gattuso, Pirlo, Ambrosini, Seedorf (Gourcuff 85), Kaka, Gilardino (Inzaghi 71).
**Bayern:** Rensing - Sagnol (Lell 68), Lucio, Van Buyten, Lahm, Salihamidzic, Hargreaves, Ottl, Schweinsteiger, Makaay (Santa Cruz 86), Podolski (Pizarro 68).

*Apr 3*
**PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 0**
**Liverpool (Eng) 3** (Gerrard 27, Riise 49, Crouch 63)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 36,500. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)
**PSV:** Gomes - Kromkamp (Feher 68), Da Costa, Simons, Salcido, Mendez (Kluivert 51), Vayrynen, Cocu, Culina, Farfan (Sun 46), Diego Tardelli.
**Liverpool:** Reina - Finnan, Carragher, Agger, Riise (Zenden 66), Gerrard, Mascherano, Xabi Alonso, Fabio Aurelio (Gonzalez 75), Crouch (Pennant 85), Kuijt.

*Apr 4*
**Chelsea (Eng) 1** (Drogba 53)
**Valencia (Spa) 1** (Silva 30)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 38,065. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
**Chelsea:** Cech - Diarra, Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, A Cole, Ballack, Mikel (J Cole 75), Lampard, Kalou (Wright-Phillips 75), Shevchenko, Drogba.
**Valencia:** Canizares - Miguel, Ayala, Moretti, Del Horno, Joaquin (Hugo Viana 87), Albiol, Albelda, Vicente (Angulo 58), Silva, Villa (Jorge Lopez 90).

*Apr 4*
**Roma (Ita) 2** (Taddei 44, Vucinic 66)
**Manchester United (Eng) 1** (Rooney 60)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 75,000. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
**Roma:** Doni - Cassetti, Mexes, Chivu, Panucci, De Rossi, Wilhelmsson (Vucinic 62), Taddei (Rosi 82), Perrotta, Mancini, Totti.
**Man Utd:** Van der Sar - Brown, O'Shea, Ferdinand, Heinze, Cristiano Ronaldo, Carrick, Scholes, Giggs (Saha 77), Rooney, Solskjaer (Fletcher 72). *Sent off: Scholes 34min.*

### Quarter-finals, 2nd legs
*Apr 10*
**Manchester United 7** (Carrick 11, 60, Smith 17, Rooney 19, Cristiano Ronaldo 44, 49, Evra 81)
**Roma 1** (De Rossi 69)
**HT:** 4-0. **Att:** 74,476. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
*Man Utd 8-3 on agg*
**Man Utd:** Van der Sar - O'Shea (Evra 52), Ferdinand, Brown, Heinze, Cristiano Ronaldo, Carrick (Richardson 73), Fletcher, Giggs (Solskjaer 61), Smith, Rooney.
**Roma:** Doni - Cassetti, Mexes, Chivu, Panucci, Pizarro, De Rossi (Faty 86), Wilhelmsson (Rosi 88), Vucinic, Mancini (Okaka Chuka 90), Totti.

*Apr 10*
**Valencia 1** (Morientes 32)
**Chelsea 2** (Shevchenko 52, Essien 90)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
*Chelsea 3-2 on agg*
**Valencia:** Canizares - Miguel, Ayala, Moretti, Del Horno, Joaquin, Albelda, Albiol (Hugo Viana 72), Silva, Villa, Morientes (Angulo 65).
**Chelsea:** Cech - Diarra (J Cole 46), Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, A Cole, Essien, Mikel, Ballack, Lampard (Makelele 90), Drogba, Shevchenko (Kalou 90).

*Apr 11*
**Bayern Munich 0**
**Milan 2** (Seedorf 27, Inzaghi 31)
**HT:** 0-2. **Att:** 66,000. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
*Milan 4-2 on agg*
**Bayern:** Kahn - Salihamidzic, Lucio, Van Buyten, Lahm, Ottl (Santa Cruz 46), Hargreaves, Van Bommel, Lell (Gorlitz 77), Makaay (Pizarro 61), Podolski.
**Milan:** Dida - Oddo, Nesta, Maldini, Jankulovski, Gattuso (Cafu 87), Pirlo, Ambrosini, Seedorf (Gourcuff 80), Kaka, Inzaghi (Serginho 70).

*Apr 11*
**Liverpool 1** (Crouch 67)
**PSV Eindhoven 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 41,447. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
*Liverpool 4-0 on agg*
**Liverpool:** Reina - Arbeloa, Hyypia, Agger (Paletta 79), Riise, Pennant, Sissoko, Xabi Alonso (Gonzalez 72), Zenden, Crouch, Bellamy (Fowler 17).
**PSV:** Gomes - Marcellis, Simons, Addo, Salcido, Feher (Sun 63), Cocu, Vayrynen, Culina, Farfan (Kluivert 63), Kone (Van Eljden 72).
*Sent off: Marcellis 64min.*

### Semi-finals, 1st legs
*Apr 24*
**Manchester United 3** (Cristiano Ronaldo 5, Rooney 59, 90)
**Milan 2** (Kaka 22, 37)
**HT:** 1-2. **Att:** 73,820. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
**Man Utd:** Van der Sar - O'Shea, Brown, Heinze, Evra, Fletcher, Carrick, Scholes, Cristiano Ronaldo, Rooney, Giggs.
**Milan:** Dida - Oddo, Nesta, Maldini (Bonera 46), Jankulovski, Gattuso (Brocchi 53), Pirlo, Ambrosini, Seedorf, Kaka, Gilardino (Gourcuff 84).

*Apr 25*
**Chelsea 1** (J Cole 29)
**Liverpool 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 39,483. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
**Chelsea:** Cech - Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, A Cole, Mikel, Makelele, Lampard, J Cole (Wright-Phillips 85), Drogba, Shevchenko (Kalou 76).
**Liverpool:** Reina - Arbeloa, Carragher, Agger, Riise, Gerrard, Mascherano, Xabi Alonso (Pennant 83), Zenden, Bellamy (Crouch 53), Kuijt.

### Semi-finals, 2nd legs
*May 1*
**Liverpool 1** (Agger 22)
**Chelsea 0**
*Aet.* **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-0. **Att:** 42,554.
**Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
*Agg 1-1. Liverpool 4-1 on pens*
**Liverpool:** Reina - Finnan, Carragher, Agger, Riise, Pennant (Xabi Alonso 78), Gerrard, Mascherano (Fowler 118), Zenden, Kuijt, Crouch (Bellamy 106).
**Chelsea:** Cech - Paulo Ferreira, Essien, Terry, A Cole, Mikel, Makelele (Geremi 118), Lampard, J Cole (Robben 98), Drogba, Kalou (Wright-Phillips 107).

*May 2*
**Milan 3** (Kaka 11, Seedorf 30, Gilardino 78)
**Manchester United 0**
**HT:** 2-0. **Att:** 67,500. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
*Milan 5-3 on agg*
**Milan:** Dida - Oddo, Nesta, Kaladze, Jankulovski, Gattuso (Cafu 84), Pirlo, Seedorf, Ambrosini, Kaka (Favalli 86), Inzaghi (Gilardino 67).
**Man Utd:** Van der Sar - O'Shea (Saha 77), Brown, Vidic, Heinze, Fletcher, Scholes, Carrick, Cristiano Ronaldo, Rooney, Giggs.

***Final – May 23 in Athens***

## UEFA CUP

### Quarter-finals, 1st legs
*Apr 5*
**AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 0**
**Werder Bremen (Ger) 0**
**Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)

**Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 0**
**Osasuna (Spa) 3** (Cuellar 1, David Lopez 71, Webo 73)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)

**Espanyol (Spa) 3** (Tamudo 15, Riera 33, Pandiani 58)
**Benfica (Por) 2** (Nuno Gomes 63, Simao 65)
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)

**Sevilla (Spa) 2** (Kanoute pen 19, Kerzhakov 36)
**Tottenham (Eng) 1** (Keane 2)
**HT:** 2-1. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)

### Quarter-finals, 2nd legs
*Apr 12*
**Benfica 0**
**Espanyol 0**
**Ref:** Larsen (Den)
*Espanyol 3-2 on agg*

**Osasuna 1** (Juanlu Gomez 62)
**Bayer Leverkusen 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
*Osasuna 4-0 on agg*

**Tottenham 2** (Defoe 65, Lennon 66)
**Sevilla 2** (Malbranque og 3, Kanoute 8)
**HT:** 0-2. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
*Sent off: Tainio (Tottenham) 90min*
*Sevilla 4-3 on agg*

**Werder Bremen 4** (Borowski 16, Klose 36, 62, Diego 82)
**AZ Alkmaar 1** (Dembele 32)
**HT:** 2-1. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
*Werder 4-1 on agg*

### Semi-finals, 1st legs
*Apr 26*
**Espanyol 3** (Moises 20, Pandiani 50, Coro 88)
**Werder Bremen 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
*Sent off: Wiese (Werder) 58min*

*Apr 26*
**Osasuna 1** (Soldado 55)
**Sevilla 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)

### Semi-finals, 2nd legs
*May 3*
**Sevilla 2** (Luis Fabiano 37, Renato 53)
**Osasuna 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
*Sevilla 2-1 on agg*

*May 3*
**Werder Bremen 1** (Hugo Almeida 4)
**Espanyol 2** (Coro 50, Lacruz 60)
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)
*Sent off: Klose (Werder) 19min*
*Espanyol 5-1 on agg*

***Final – May 16 in Glasgow***

## AUSTRIA

**Mar 31:** Sturm Graz 2 Pasching 1; Rapid Wien 2 Salzburg 2; Wacker Tirol 1 Mattersburg 3; SV Ried 3 Grazer AK 1.
**Apr 1:** Altach 0 Austria Wien 1.
**Apr 7:** Austria Wien 1 Mattersburg 1; Wacker Tirol 2 Rapid Wien 3; Pasching 3 SV Ried 1; Grazer AK 4 Altach 1.
**Apr 8:** Salzburg 3 Sturm Graz 1.
**Apr 14:** Rapid Wien 2 Wacker Tirol 1; Sturm Graz 0 Salzburg 2; Altach 3 Grazer AK 1; Mattersburg 3 Austria Wien 1.
**Apr 15:** SV Ried 2 Pasching 1.
**Apr 17:** Rapid Wien 2 Mattersburg 2.
**Apr 18:** Pasching 1 Altach 1; Salzburg 2 SV Ried 0; Wacker Tirol 0 Sturm Graz 2; Grazer AK 2 Austria Wien 1.
**Apr 21:** SV Ried 2 Wacker Tirol 1; Altach 0 Salzburg 2; Austria Wien 2 Pasching 0; Mattersburg 5 Grazer AK 1.
**Apr 22:** Sturm Graz 1 Rapid Wien 0.
**Apr 28:** Pasching 3 Grazer AK 0; Salzburg 2 Austria Wien 2; Sturm Graz 3 Mattersburg 1; Wacker Tirol 1 Altach 1.
**Apr 29:** Rapid Wien 5 SV Ried 2.

| AUSTRIA | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Salzburg | 31 | 20 | 8 | 3 | 64 | 19 | 68 |
| Mattersburg | 31 | 14 | 7 | 10 | 49 | 48 | 49 |
| Rapid Wien | 31 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 46 | 44 | 43 |
| Pasching | 31 | 11 | 9 | 11 | 36 | 33 | 42 |
| SV Ried | 31 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 38 | 39 | 41 |
| Austria Wien | 31 | 9 | 12 | 10 | 36 | 37 | 39 |
| Altach | 31 | 9 | 5 | 17 | 40 | 55 | 32 |
| Sturm Graz* | 31 | 13 | 5 | 13 | 35 | 37 | 31 |
| Wacker Tirol | 31 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 32 | 48 | 31 |
| Grazer AK** | 31 | 8 | 9 | 14 | 40 | 56 | 5 |

**13pts deducted – 3pts for licence application irregularities, 10pts for going insolvent*
***28pts deducted – 6pts for failing to pay former player, 10pts for going insolvent, 12pts for licence application irregularities*

## BELGIUM

**Friday, March 30**
**FC Brussels 1** (Bangoura 32)
**Gent 1** (Stoica 88) Att: 4,500

**Saturday, March 31**
**Cercle Brugge 1** (Vandenbussche 90)
**Roeselare 1** (Eloi 60) Att: 8,356

**Charleroi 3** (Akgul 3, Perbet pen 21, 24)
**Germinal Beerschot 3** (Cruz 41, Sterchele 44, 76) Att: 10,853

**Lierse 1** (Jarju 66)
**Anderlecht 4** (Frutos 4, Van der Ziji og 14, Boussoufa 58, Deschacht 60) Att: 10,000

**Lokeren 1** (Kristinsson 2)
**Westerlo 1** (Ogunsoto 81) Att: 4,800

**Standard 0**
**Beveren 0** Att: 22,000

**Zulte-Waregem 1** (Leleu 89)
**Mons 2** (Brahami 33, Stolica 43) Att: 5,500

**Sunday, April 1**
**Genk 2** (Matoukou 13, Soetaers 34)
**St Truiden 0** Att: 23,570

**Mouscron 2** (Kebe 31, Custovic 47)
**Club Brugge 1** (Leko 58) Att: 7,200

**Friday, April 6**
**Anderlecht 1** (Tchite 20)
**Standard 0** Att: 25,455

**Saturday, April 7**
**Beveren 1** (Gervinho 17)
**Cercle Brugge 1** (Vandenbussche 75) Att: 5,000

**Club Brugge 2** (Yulu-Matondo 64, Balaban 73)
**Lokeren 2** (Armoumen 42, Tambwe 89) Att: 25,791

**Mons 1** (Stolica 26)
**Lierse 1** (Jarju 11) Att: 4,500

**Mouscron 2** (Custovic 38, 48)
**FC Brussels 2** (Bangoura 56, Bouchouari 80) Att: 4,400

**Roeselare 1** (Eloi 80)
**Gent 3** (Rudi 42, 78, Foley 69) Att: 4,800

**St Truiden 2** (Munyaneza 73, Peeters 80)
**Zulte-Waregem 2** (Siani 29, D'Haene 54) Att: 6,000

**Sunday, April 8**
**Germinal Beerschot 2** (Roelandts 9, Wamfor 61)
**Genk 1** (Ljubojevic 71) Att: 10,723

**Westerlo 0**
**Charleroi 1** (Akgul 10) Att: 5,000

**Friday, April 13**
**Cercle Brugge 0**
**Anderlecht 1** (Tchite 15) Att: 12,101

**Saturday, April 14**
**FC Brussels 6** (Bangoura 6, Le Postollec 10, Gorius 25, Matumona 60, Bouchouari 70, 83)
**Roeselare 2** (Smits 48, Allagui 65) Att: 4,000

**Genk 3** (Ljubojevic 43, Soetaers 45, Chatelle 63)
**Westerlo 1** (Dekelver 51) Att: 23,886

**Lierse 0**
**St Truiden 0** Att: 7,257

**Lokeren 1** (Tambwe 84)
**Mouscron 1** (Ba 59) Att: 4,350

**Standard 1** (De Camargo 45)
**Mons 0** Att: 24,000

**Zulte-Waregem 0**
**Germinal Beerschot 2** (Sterchele pen 58, D'Haene og 78) Att: 4,500

**Sunday, April 15**
**Charleroi 1** (Perbet 72)
**Club Brugge 1** (Yulu-Matondo 90) Att: 14,849

**Gent 2** (Olufade 34, Foley 44)
**Beveren 1** (Dissa 70) Att: 8,313

**Friday, April 20**
**Germinal Beerschot 2** (Roelandts 44, Cruz 77)
**Lierse 3** (King og 57, Miller 59, 86) Att: 9,947

**Saturday, April 21**
**Beveren 2** (Dissa 38, Gervinho 68)
**Roeselare 2** (Eloi 27, 28) Att: 3,000

**Lokeren 0**
**FC Brussels 0** Att: 4,500

**Mons 1** (Dahmane 89)
**Cercle Brugge 0** Att: 4,500

**Mouscron 2** (Custovic 4, 30)
**Charleroi 1** (Akpala 88) Att: 5,769

**St Truiden 0**
**Standard 3** (Fellaini 43, Witsel 48, Lukunku 90) Att: 10,500

**Westerlo 4** (Ogunsoto 28, Dekelver 49, 86, Delen 61)
**Zulte-Waregem 2** (Sergeant 48, Matthijs 79) Att: 4,500

**Sunday, April 22**
**Anderlecht 1** (Frutos 28)
**Gent 0** Att: 24,745

**Club Brugge 0**
**Genk 1** (Ljubojevic 23) Att: 25,791

**Friday, April 27**
**Standard 2** (Jovanovic 13, De Roeck og 75)
**Germinal Beerschot 2** (Cruz 36, Roelandts 60) Att: 25,000

**Saturday, April 28**
**FC Brussels 2** (Matumona 8, Tehoue 68)
**Beveren 0** Att: 4,500

**Cercle Brugge 0**
**St Truiden 1** (Sishuba 38) Att: 4,700

**Charleroi 4** (Smolders 7, 59, Camus 10, Defays 49)
**Lokeren 3** (Tambwe 63, 74, 83) Att: 9,299

**Gent 4** (De Beule 23, Azofeifa 29, Gregoire 77, Ruiz 83)
**Mons 1** (Dahmane 9) Att: 8,034

**Lierse 1** (Kums 60)
**Westerlo 1** (Ogunsoto 55) Att: 8,557

**Zulte-Waregem 2** (Dosunmu 34, Van Nieuwenhuyze 70)
**Club Brugge 1** (Leko 32) Att: 8,500

**Sunday, April 29**
**Genk 3** (Ljubojevic 35, Cornelis pen 86, Vandooren 90)
**Mouscron 2** (Ba 51, 63) Att: 25,000

**Roeselare 0**
**Anderlecht 5** (Legear 2, 40, Hassan 21, Frutos pen 43, Mbokani 84) Att: 9,036

| BELGIUM | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anderlecht | 31 | 21 | 8 | 2 | 60 | 26 | 71 |
| Genk | 31 | 21 | 6 | 4 | 69 | 32 | 69 |
| Standard | 31 | 18 | 6 | 7 | 60 | 35 | 60 |
| Gent | 31 | 17 | 5 | 9 | 53 | 37 | 56 |
| Charleroi | 31 | 14 | 9 | 8 | 46 | 39 | 51 |
| Club Brugge | 31 | 13 | 8 | 10 | 51 | 36 | 47 |
| Westerlo | 31 | 12 | 8 | 11 | 38 | 38 | 44 |
| Germinal B | 31 | 11 | 9 | 11 | 46 | 45 | 42 |
| Mons | 31 | 10 | 7 | 14 | 32 | 39 | 37 |
| Zulte-Waregem | 31 | 9 | 9 | 13 | 38 | 48 | 36 |
| Roeselare | 31 | 9 | 9 | 13 | 46 | 61 | 36 |
| FC Brussels | 31 | 7 | 14 | 10 | 36 | 42 | 35 |
| Mouscron | 31 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 43 | 52 | 35 |
| Cercle Brugge | 31 | 9 | 7 | 15 | 24 | 31 | 34 |
| St Truiden | 31 | 8 | 8 | 15 | 34 | 46 | 32 |
| Lokeren | 31 | 5 | 14 | 12 | 30 | 42 | 29 |
| Beveren | 31 | 5 | 9 | 17 | 28 | 53 | 24 |
| Lierse | 31 | 5 | 7 | 19 | 26 | 58 | 22 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
20 Patrick Ogunsoto (Westerlo)
18 Adnan Custovic (Mouscron)
18 Francois Sterchele (Germinal Beerschot)
17 Mohammed Tchite (Anderlecht)
16 Bosko Balaban (Club Brugge)
15 Adekanmi Olufade (Gent)

### BELGIAN CUP – semi-finals
*1st legs - Apr 17/18*
Anderlecht v Standard 0-1
Gent v Club Brugge 3-1

## BULGARIA

**Mar 30:** Chernomorets 1 Belasitsa 2.
**Mar 31:** Botev 1 Lovech 2; Slavia 1 Spartak Varna 1.
**Apr 1:** Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Cherno More 0; Vihren 0 Rodopa 0; Beroe 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 5; Levski 8 Marek 0; CSKA 3 Rilski 0.
**Apr 4:** Lovech 2 Slavia 0.
**Apr 6:** Cherno More 3 Chernomorets 1; Spartak Varna 1 Botev 0.
**Apr 7:** Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 4; Rodopa 1 Marek 2; Lovech 2 Beroe 0; Rilski 0 Slavia 1; Belasitsa 2 Vihren 1; CSKA 0 Levski 1.
**Apr 14:** Lokomotiv Sofia 1 Lovech 0; Slavia 0 CSKA 1; Chernomorets 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Beroe 1 Spartak Varna 0; Levski 3 Rodopa 0; Botev 1 Rilski 0; Vihren 0 Cherno More 2; Marek 1 Belasitsa 1.
**Apr 18:** Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Vihren 0; Belasitsa 1 Rodopa 0; Spartak Varna 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 2; Slavia 0 Levski 3; CSKA 2 Botev 0; Rilski 0 Beroe 1; Lovech 11 Chernomorets 0.
**Apr 19:** Cherno More 1 Marek 0.
**Apr 21:** Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Rilski 0.
**Apr 22:** Marek 3 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Vihren 0 Lovech 1; Beroe 0 CSKA 1; Rodopa 0 Cherno More 0; Levski 1 Belasitsa 0; Chernomorets 0 Spartak Varna 3; Botev 1 Slavia 1.
**Apr 28:** Spartak Varna 0 Vihren 0; Lovech 4 Marek 1; Slavia 2 Beroe 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 5 Rodopa 0; Rilski 3 Chernomorets 1.
**Apr 29:** Cherno More 1 Belasitsa 0; Botev 2 Levski 2; CSKA 4 Lokomotiv Sofia 1.

| BULGARIA | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Levski | 25 | 20 | 4 | 1 | 74 | 7 | 64 |
| CSKA | 25 | 19 | 3 | 3 | 53 | 11 | 60 |
| Lok Sofia | 25 | 19 | 3 | 3 | 53 | 21 | 60 |
| Lovech | 25 | 16 | 5 | 4 | 48 | 19 | 53 |
| Cherno More | 25 | 12 | 5 | 8 | 32 | 19 | 41 |
| Slavia | 25 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 33 | 29 | 40 |
| Lok Plovdiv | 25 | 11 | 4 | 10 | 40 | 29 | 37 |
| Botev | 25 | 10 | 3 | 12 | 34 | 37 | 33 |
| Belasitsa | 25 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 29 | 32 | 29 |
| Beroe | 25 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 26 | 30 | 29 |
| Vihren | 25 | 8 | 4 | 13 | 19 | 29 | 28 |
| Spartak Varna | 25 | 8 | 3 | 14 | 23 | 43 | 27 |
| Marek | 25 | 7 | 6 | 12 | 33 | 51 | 27 |
| Rilski | 25 | 8 | 0 | 17 | 23 | 45 | 24 |
| Rodopa | 25 | 4 | 4 | 17 | 17 | 44 | 16 |
| Chemomorets* | 25 | 0 | 1 | 24 | 8 | 99 | -2 |

**3pts deducted for failing to register enough youth players*

## CROATIA

**Mar 31:** Medimurje 1 Rijeka 1; Osijek 1 Hajduk 2; Pula 2 Zagreb 3; Cibalia 2 Sibenik 1; Kamen Ingrad 1 Slaven 2; Varteks 2 Dinamo 3.
**Apr 7:** Slaven 2 Medimurje 0; Hajduk 0 Pula 1; Zagreb 1 Cibalia 1; Sibenik 3 Kamen Ingrad 1; Dinamo 1 Osijek 0; Rijeka 3 Varteks 0.
**Apr 14:** Pula 1 Dinamo 2; Osijek 1 Varteks 0; Slaven 3 Rijeka 0; Medimurje 0 Sibenik 1; Kamen Ingrad 0 Zagreb 6; Cibalia 0 Hajduk 1.
**Apr 18:** Rijeka 0 Osijek 2; Varteks 2 Pula 2; Sibenik 0 Slaven 0; Zagreb 1 Medimurje 1; Hajduk 4 Kamen Ingrad 0; Dinamo 4 Cibalia 0.
**Apr 21:** Pula 3 Osijek 1; Cibalia 1 Varteks 0; Sibenik 3 Rijeka 1; Slaven 4 Zagreb 2; Medimurje 2 Hajduk 4; Kamen Ingrad 0 Dinamo 1.
**Apr 28:** Osijek 2 Cibalia 2; Varteks 3 Kamen Ingrad 2; Zagreb 3 Sibenik 1; Hajduk 1 Slaven 1; Dinamo 4 Medimurje 1; Rijeka 1 Pula 1.
**May 2:** Slaven 0 Dinamo 3; Cibalia 1 Pula 0; Kamen Ingrad 0 Osijek 2; Medimurje 1 Varteks 2; Zagreb 1 Rijeka 3; Sibenik 2 Hajduk 2.

| CROATIA | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dinamo | 30 | 27 | 2 | 1 | 74 | 22 | 83 |
| Hajduk | 30 | 21 | 5 | 4 | 55 | 19 | 68 |
| Zagreb | 30 | 18 | 3 | 9 | 56 | 32 | 57 |
| Sibenik | 30 | 14 | 6 | 10 | 45 | 39 | 48 |
| Slaven | 30 | 14 | 6 | 10 | 37 | 32 | 48 |
| Rijeka | 30 | 11 | 5 | 14 | 46 | 49 | 38 |
| Osijek | 30 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 33 | 42 | 36 |
| Varteks | 30 | 10 | 5 | 15 | 40 | 55 | 35 |
| Medimurje | 30 | 10 | 4 | 16 | 38 | 51 | 34 |
| Pula | 30 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 28 | 39 | 27 |
| Cibalia | 30 | 6 | 5 | 19 | 25 | 51 | 23 |
| Kamen Ingrad | 30 | 3 | 3 | 24 | 26 | 72 | 12 |

## CZECH REPUBLIC

**Mar 31:** Slovacko 0 Ceske Budejovice 1.
**Apr 1:** Jablonec 0 Pribram 0; Kladno 1 Ostrava 1; Most 0 Teplice 0; Plzen 2 Zlin 0; Brno 1 Liberec 2; Olomouc 1 Slavia 2.
**Apr 2:** Sparta 4 Mlada Boleslav 1.
**Apr 7:** Liberec 1 Slovacko 1; Zlin 2 Sparta 0.
**Apr 8:** Mlada Boleslav 2 Pribram 1; Olomouc 1 Plzen 3; Slavia 3 Most 0; Ceske Budejovice 0 Kladno 2; Teplice 1 Jablonec 0.
**Apr 9:** Ostrava 1 Brno 2.
**Apr 14:** Sparta 2 Teplice 1; Kladno 0 Mlada Boleslav 0.
**Apr 15:** Pribram 1 Zlin 1; Plzen 0 Ostrava 1; Most 0 Liberec 0; Jablonec 0 Ceske Budejovice 0; Slovacko 0 Slavia 0.
**Apr 16:** Brno 2 Olomouc 1.
**Apr 18:** Zlin 0 Mlada Boleslav 2; Teplice 1 Pribram 0; Slavia 0 Plzen 1; Ceske Budejovice 2 Sparta 0; Ostrava 1 Most 0.
**Apr 19:** Olomouc 2 Kladno 0; Liberec 3 Jablonec 1; Brno 1 Slovacko 0.
**Apr 22:** Slovacko 1 Olomouc 0; Pribram 0 Ostrava 0; Plzen 2 Ceske Budejovice 2; Most 4 Brno 2; Mlada Boleslav 2 Teplice 0; Kladno 0 Liberec 1; Jablonec 1 Zlin 1.
**Apr 23:** Sparta 1 Slavia 0.
**Apr 28:** Slovacko 1 Most 1.
**Apr 29:** Olomouc 1 Jablonec 1; Slavia 0 Kladno 0; Brno 1 Plzen 2; Ceske Budejovice 0 Mlada Boleslav 3; Teplice 1 Zlin 0; Liberec 5 Pribram 1.
**Apr 30:** Ostrava 2 Sparta 2.

| CZECH REPUBLIC | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Liberec | 25 | 14 | 8 | 3 | 38 | 15 | 50 |
| Sparta | 25 | 14 | 7 | 4 | 31 | 17 | 49 |
| Slavia | 25 | 14 | 6 | 5 | 37 | 19 | 48 |
| M Boleslav | 25 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 38 | 25 | 47 |
| Plzen | 25 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 30 | 26 | 38 |
| Brno | 25 | 10 | 7 | 8 | 30 | 28 | 37 |
| Ostrava | 25 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 33 | 29 | 36 |
| Teplice | 25 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 37 | 32 | 35 |
| C Budejovice | 25 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 24 | 34 | 34 |
| Jablonec | 25 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 27 | 26 | 32 |
| Most | 25 | 5 | 12 | 8 | 26 | 31 | 27 |
| Kladno | 25 | 6 | 8 | 11 | 19 | 31 | 26 |
| Olomouc | 25 | 6 | 4 | 15 | 25 | 37 | 22 |
| Zlin | 25 | 4 | 9 | 12 | 15 | 28 | 21 |
| Pribram | 25 | 2 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 32 | 17 |
| Slovacko | 25 | 2 | 10 | 13 | 16 | 30 | 16 |

## DENMARK

**Mar 31:** Horsens 1 FC Copenhagen 3.
**Apr 1:** Silkeborg 0 Randers 0; Brondby 4 Vejle 0; OB 1 AaB 1; Nordsjaelland 4 Viborg 1; Midtjylland 3 Esbjerg 1.
**Apr 5:** Viborg 0 OB 2; AaB 0 Midtjylland 2; Vejle 0 Horsens 0; Randers 1 Nordsjaelland 6; FC Copenhagen 3 Silkeborg 1; Esbjerg 1 Brondby 1.
**Apr 8:** Brondby 3 Randers 0.
**Apr 9:** Horsens 3 Viborg 1; Silkeborg 4 AaB 6; OB 3 Vejle 2; Nordsjaelland 1 Esbjerg 1; Midtjylland 1 FC Copenhagen 4.
**Apr 14:** AaB 3 Brondby 2.

**Apr 15:** Esbjerg 0 Horsens 1; Viborg 2 Silkeborg 1; Midtjylland 1 Nordsjaelland 1; Vejle 0 Randers 2; FC Copenhagen 4 OB 2.
**Apr 18:** OB 0 Esbjerg 0; Silkeborg 1 Vejle 1; Randers 1 AaB 1; Horsens 2 Midtjylland 2; Nordsjaelland 0 FC Copenhagen 1; Brondby 3 Viborg 1.
**Apr 21:** Midtjylland 2 Randers 1.
**Apr 22:** Esbjerg 1 Silkeborg 2; Viborg 0 AaB 2; Vejle 3 Brondby 0; Nordsjaelland 2 OB 1; FC Copenhagen 3 Horsens 1.
**Apr 28:** OB 1 Midtjylland 0.
**Apr 29:** AaB 2 Vejle 0; Silkeborg 0 FC Copenhagen 1; Randers 3 Viborg 2; Horsens 2 Nordsjaelland 3; Brondby 2 Esbjerg 1.

**DENMARK**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FC Copenhagen | 27 | 20 | 6 | 1 | 55 | 19 | 66 |
| Midtjylland | 27 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 49 | 32 | 50 |
| OB | 27 | 14 | 7 | 6 | 37 | 27 | 49 |
| AaB | 27 | 14 | 6 | 7 | 42 | 29 | 48 |
| Nordsjaelland | 27 | 13 | 6 | 8 | 53 | 31 | 45 |
| Brondby | 27 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 42 | 31 | 41 |
| Randers | 27 | 9 | 7 | 11 | 34 | 41 | 34 |
| Esbjerg | 27 | 7 | 9 | 11 | 37 | 41 | 30 |
| Horsens | 27 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 24 | 40 | 27 |
| Viborg | 27 | 7 | 4 | 16 | 28 | 54 | 25 |
| Silkeborg | 27 | 4 | 4 | 19 | 27 | 52 | 16 |
| Vejle | 27 | 3 | 6 | 18 | 27 | 58 | 15 |

## ENGLAND

**Saturday, March 31**
**Bolton 1** (Davies 80)
**Sheffield United 0** Att: 24,312

**Charlton 1** (D Bent pen 86)
**Wigan 0** Att: 26,500

**Fulham 1** (Pearce 90)
**Portsmouth 1** (Kranjcar 4) Att: 22,806

**Liverpool 4** (Crouch 4, 35, 81, Agger 60)
**Arsenal 1** (Gallas 73) Att: 43,958

**Manchester United 4** (Scholes 61, Carrick 73, Park 83, Solskjaer 90)
**Blackburn 1** (Derbyshire 29) Att: 76,089

**Newcastle 0**
**Manchester City 1** (Mpenza 80) Att: 52,004

**Watford 0**
**Chelsea 1** (Kalou 90) Att: 19,793

**West Ham 2** (Zamora 2, Tevez 45)
**Middlesbrough 0** Att: 34,977

**Sunday, April 1**
**Tottenham 1** (Keane pen 41)
**Reading 0** Att: 36,067

**Monday, April 2**
**Aston Villa 1** (Agbonlahor 83)
**Everton 1** (Lescott 15) Att: 36,407

**Friday, April 6**
**Everton 4** (Carsley 25, Stubbs 34, Vaughan 45, Anichebe 80)
**Fulham 1** (Bocanegra 22) Att: 35,612

**Manchester City 0**
**Charlton 0** Att: 41,424

**Saturday, April 7**
**Arsenal 0**
**West Ham 1** (Zamora 45) Att: 60,098

**Blackburn 1** (McCarthy pen 24)
**Aston Villa 2** (Berger 34, Agbonlahor 73) Att: 24,211

**Chelsea 1** (Ricardo Carvalho 52)
**Tottenham 0** Att: 41,864

**Middlesbrough 4** (Viduka 5, 75, Boateng 27, Rochemback 79)
**Watford 1** (Francis 23) Att: 25,534

**Portsmouth 2** (Taylor 30, Ferdinand og 89)
**Manchester United 1** (O'Shea 90) Att: 20,223

**Reading 1** (Gunnarsson 47)
**Liverpool 2** (Arbeloa 15, Kuijt 86) Att: 24,121

**Sheffield United 1** (Nade 74)
**Newcastle 2** (Martins 17, Taylor 80) Att: 32,572

**Wigan 1** (Heskey 32)
**Bolton 3** (Anelka 44, Teimoorian 68, 73) Att: 18,610

**Monday, April 9**
**Aston Villa 1** (Agbonlahor 50)
**Wigan 1** (Heskey 21) Att: 31,920

**Bolton 1** (Davies 18)
**Everton 1** (Vaughan 33) Att: 25,179

**Charlton 0**
**Reading 0** Att: 26,271

**Fulham 1** (Bocanegra 76)
**Manchester City 3** (Barton 21, Beasley 36, Vassell 59) Att: 22,435

**Newcastle 0**
**Arsenal 0** Att: 52,293

**Watford 4** (Bouazza pen 28, 72, Mahon 45, Priskin 50)
**Portsmouth 2** (Taylor 16, Mvuemba 81) Att: 18,119

**Saturday, April 14**
**Arsenal 2** (Rosicky 31, Fabregas 46)
**Bolton 1** (Anelka 10) Att: 60,101

**Manchester City 0**
**Liverpool 0** Att: 45,883

**Middlesbrough 1** (Rochemback 13)
**Aston Villa 3** (Gardner 45, Moore 70, Petrov 77) Att: 26,959

**Portsmouth 2** (Mwaruwari 7, Taylor 59)
**Newcastle 1** (Emre pen 69) Att: 20,165

**Reading 1** (Hunt 15)
**Fulham 0** Att: 24,082

**Sheffield United 3** (Tonge 39, Jagielka 68, Stead 78)
**West Ham 0** Att: 31,593

**Sunday, April 15**
**Everton 2** (Lescott 81, McFadden 90)
**Charlton 1** (D Bent 89) Att: 34,028

**Wigan 3** (Heskey 2, Baines 30, Kilbane 60)
**Tottenham 3** (Berbatov 4, Keane pen 35, 68) Att: 16,506

**Tuesday, April 17**
**Arsenal 3** (Rosicky 12, Fabregas 73, Julio Baptista 80)
**Manchester City 1** (Beasley 41) Att: 59,913

**Manchester United 2** (Carrick 4, Rooney 50)
**Sheffield United 0** Att: 75,540

**Wednesday, April 18**
**Blackburn 3** (Samba 7, Roberts 10, McCarthy 32)
**Watford 1** (Rinaldi 21) Att: 16,035

**Liverpool 2** (Gerrard 58, pen 65)
**Middlesbrough 0** Att: 41,458

**West Ham 1** (Tevez 35)
**Chelsea 4** (Wright-Phillips 31, 36, Kalou 51, Drogba 62) Att: 34,966

**Saturday, April 21**
**Bolton 1** (Shorey og 64)
**Reading 3** (Doyle pen 84, 89, Hunt 90) Att: 23,533

**Charlton 1** (El Karkouri 59)
**Sheffield United 1** (Stead 69) Att: 27,111

**Fulham 1** (Montella 10)
**Blackburn 1** (McCarthy 61) Att: 23,625

**Liverpool 2** (Kuijt 30, 68)
**Wigan 0** Att: 44,003

**Manchester United 1** (Richardson 3)
**Middlesbrough 1** (Viduka 45) Att: 75,967

**Tottenham 2** (Keane 30, Jenas 90)
**Arsenal 2** (Toure 65, Adebayor 78) Att: 36,050

**Watford 1** (Priskin 75)
**Manchester City 1** (Vassell 53) Att: 18,537

**West Ham 1** (Zamora 13)
**Everton 0** Att: 34,945

**Sunday, April 22**
**Aston Villa 0**
**Portsmouth 0** Att: 31,745

**Newcastle 0**
**Chelsea 0** Att: 52,056

**Saturday, April 28**
**Blackburn 4** (Roberts 60, Hreidarsson og 78, Samba 80, Derbyshire 83)
**Charlton 1** (D Bent 71) Att: 24,921

**Chelsea 2** (Kalou 22, Jaaskelainen og 34)
**Bolton 2** (Michalik 19, Davies 54) Att: 41,105

**Everton 2** (Stubbs 12, Manuel Fernandes 50)
**Manchester United 4** (O'Shea 61, P Neville og 67, Rooney 78, Eagles 90) Att: 39,682

**Manchester City 0**
**Aston Villa 2** (Carew 24, Maloney 75) Att: 40,799

**Middlesbrough 2** (Viduka 66, Pogatetz 89)
**Tottenham 3** (Keane 12, 83, Berbatov 47) Att: 27,861

**Portsmouth 2** (Mwaruwari 27, Kranjcar 32)
**Liverpool 1** (Hyypia 59) Att: 20,201

**Sheffield United 1** (Powell og 43)
**Watford 0** Att: 30,690

**Wigan 0**
**West Ham 3** (Boa Morte 29, Benayoun 57, Harewood 85) Att: 24,726

**Sunday, April 29**
**Arsenal 3** (Julio Baptista 4, Adebayor 84, Gilberto Silva pen 87)
**Fulham 1** (Davies 78) Att: 60,043

**Monday, April 30**
**Reading 1** (Kitson 51)
**Newcastle 0** Att: 24,109

**ENGLAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Man Utd | 35 | 27 | 4 | 4 | 82 | 26 | 85 |
| Chelsea | 35 | 24 | 8 | 3 | 62 | 22 | 80 |
| Liverpool | 36 | 20 | 7 | 9 | 55 | 24 | 67 |
| Arsenal | 36 | 19 | 9 | 8 | 62 | 34 | 66 |
| Bolton | 36 | 16 | 7 | 13 | 44 | 47 | 55 |
| Everton | 36 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 48 | 35 | 54 |
| Reading | 36 | 16 | 6 | 14 | 49 | 42 | 54 |
| Portsmouth | 36 | 14 | 11 | 11 | 45 | 39 | 53 |
| Tottenham | 35 | 15 | 8 | 12 | 52 | 52 | 53 |
| Blackburn | 35 | 14 | 5 | 16 | 46 | 50 | 47 |
| Aston Villa | 36 | 10 | 16 | 10 | 38 | 39 | 46 |
| Newcastle | 36 | 11 | 9 | 16 | 37 | 44 | 42 |
| Man City | 36 | 11 | 9 | 16 | 28 | 41 | 42 |
| Middlesbrough | 36 | 10 | 10 | 16 | 40 | 48 | 40 |
| Sheffield Utd | 36 | 10 | 8 | 18 | 31 | 50 | 38 |
| Fulham | 36 | 7 | 15 | 14 | 36 | 57 | 36 |
| Wigan | 36 | 9 | 8 | 19 | 35 | 57 | 35 |
| West Ham | 36 | 10 | 5 | 21 | 31 | 58 | 35 |
| Charlton | 36 | 8 | 9 | 19 | 32 | 56 | 33 |
| Watford | 36 | 4 | 12 | 20 | 26 | 58 | 24 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
19 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
16 Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United)
15 Benni McCarthy (Blackburn)
14 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)
12 Yakubu Aiyegbeni (Middlesbrough)
12 Darren Bent (Charlton)
12 Kevin Doyle (Reading)
12 Dirk Kuijt (Liverpool)

### FA CUP – semi-finals
**Apr 14:** Watford 1 Manchester United 4.
**Apr 15:** Blackburn 1 Chelsea 2 (aet).

## FRANCE

**Saturday, March 31**
**Lorient 2** (Saifi 60, Le Pen 74)
**Marseille 1** (Cisse pen 81) Att: 15,752

**Sunday, April 1**
**Le Mans 2** (Bangoura 46, De Melo 51)
**Auxerre 2** (Akale 65, Kaboul 71) Att: 13,712

**Lens 1** (Rozehnal og 51)
**Paris Saint-Germain 2** (Diane 2, Armand 72) Att: 37,808

**Lille 0**
**Valenciennes 2** (Doumeng 77, Hassli 90) Att: 14,778

**Nantes 0**
**Sedan 1** (Ducourtioux 62) Att: 35,553

**Nice 1** (Laslandes 11)
**Monaco 1** (Plasil 80) Att: 13,524

**Toulouse 1** (Elmander 72)
**Saint-Etienne 0** Att: 25,886

**Troyes 0**
**Sochaux 1** (Pitau 33) Att: 11,554

**Saturday, April 7**
**Auxerre 0**
**Bordeaux 0** Att: 14,556

**Monaco 0**
**Troyes 0** Att: 9,311

**Nancy 0**
**Lorient 1** (Saifi pen 69) Att: 18,370

**Paris Saint-Germain 2** (Luyindula 53, Diane 81)
**Le Mans 1** (Grafite 31) Att: 42,368

**Rennes 1** (Utaka 30)
**Lens 0** Att: 27,108

**Saint-Etienne 2** (Hognon 27, Gomis 34)
**Nantes 1** (Diallo 29) Att: 33,606

**Sochaux 1** (Dagano 71)
**Nice 1** (Bellion 68) Att: 16,759

**Valenciennes 0**
**Lyon 0** Att: 15,999

**Sunday, April 8**
**Marseille 4** (Niang pen 9, 90, Civelli 37, 63)
**Lille 1** (Bastos pen 11) Att: 53,000

**Sedan 0**
**Toulouse 2** (Paulo Cesar 78, Ebondo 85) Att: 15,424

**Saturday, April 14**
**Bordeaux 0**
**Paris Saint-Germain 0** Att: 31,731

**Le Mans 0**
**Rennes 0** Att: 12,683

**Lille 2** (Fauvergue 49, Mirallas 66)
**Sochaux 0** Att: 15,454

**Lorient 0**
**Monaco 0** Att: 14,213

**Nantes 0**
**Lens 0** Att: 33,193

**Toulouse 2** (Emana 7, Mansare 30)
**Auxerre 0** Att: 22,404

**Troyes 0**
**Nancy 0** Att: 18,327

**Valenciennes 0**
**Marseille 0** Att: 16,398

**Sunday, April 15**
**Lyon 1** (Ben Arfa 44)
**Sedan 0** Att: 37,539

**Nice 2** (Bellion 70, pen 81)
**Saint-Etienne 1** (Diatta 47) Att: 12,405

**Wednesday, April 18**
**Bordeaux 3** (Chamakh 16, 43, Cavenaghi 57)
**Nancy 0** Att: 21,732

**Lyon 0**
**Rennes 0** Att: 39,848

**Saturday, April 21**
**Lens 2** (Carriere 57, Seydou Keita 89)
**Le Mans 0** Att: 35,319

**Marseille 2** (Cisse 56, M'Bami 86)
**Troyes 1** (Jaziri 80) Att: 47,708

**Monaco 3** (Meriem 42, Menez 76, Monsoreau 78)
**Lille 1** (Keita 84) Att: 10,004

**Nancy 1** (Gavanon pen 39)
**Valenciennes 0** Att: 19,505





**Paris Saint-Germain 4** (Pauleta 17, 65, Rothen 43, Luyindula 66)
**Nantes 0** Att: 42,744

**Rennes 3** (Briand pen 63, Marveaux 75, Cheyrou 87)
**Toulouse 2** (Emana 30, Fabinho 76) Att: 27,477

**Sedan 1** (Echouafni og 90)
**Nice 1** (Kone pen 87) Att: 18,200

**Sochaux 1** (Grax 73)
**Lorient 1** (Gignac 57) Att: 13,952

**Sunday, April 22**
**Auxerre 0**
**Lyon 0** Att: 16,141

**Saint-Etienne 0**
**Bordeaux 2** (Menegazzo 50, Obertan 90) Att: 27,851

**Saturday, April 28**
**Lille 0**
**Nancy 1** (Dia 75) Att: 15,352

**Lorient 0**
**Saint-Etienne 0** Att: 15,055

**Lyon 2** (Fred 38, Malouda 66)
**Le Mans 1** (Grafite 62) Att: 40,026

**Nantes 0**
**Rennes 2** (Utaka 55, Briand 59) Att: 35,616

**Nice 0**
**Auxerre 0** Att: 10,936

**Toulouse 1** (Mansare 8)
**Paris Saint-Germain 3** (Luyindula 32, Cisse 44, Rothen 90) Att: 30,594

**Troyes 3** (Barbosa 32, Matuidi 74, 82)
**Sedan 2** (Lachor 55, Job 68) Att: 11,877

**Valenciennes 2** (Haddad 84, Chelle 88)
**Monaco 2** (Menez 47, Koller 66) Att: 15,816

**Sunday, April 29**
**Bordeaux 1** (Jussie 13)
**Lens 0** Att: 32,253

**Marseille 4** (Cana 13, Cisse 69, Nasri 72, Ribery 85)
**Sochaux 2** (Leroy 5, Rodriguez og 90) Att: 54,702

**FRANCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lyon | 34 | 22 | 8 | 4 | 57 | 24 | 74 |
| Bordeaux | 34 | 16 | 7 | 11 | 37 | 30 | 55 |
| Lens | 34 | 14 | 11 | 9 | 45 | 35 | 53 |
| Marseille | 34 | 15 | 7 | 12 | 46 | 35 | 52 |
| Toulouse | 34 | 15 | 7 | 12 | 41 | 39 | 52 |
| Rennes | 34 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 31 | 26 | 51 |
| Sochaux | 34 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 40 | 42 | 48 |
| Saint-Etienne | 34 | 13 | 7 | 14 | 49 | 45 | 46 |
| Lille | 34 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 40 | 37 | 46 |
| Lorient | 34 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 29 | 31 | 46 |
| Monaco | 34 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 40 | 34 | 45 |
| Auxerre | 34 | 10 | 15 | 9 | 34 | 37 | 45 |
| Le Mans | 34 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 39 | 41 | 43 |
| Nancy | 34 | 11 | 10 | 13 | 28 | 38 | 43 |
| Paris SG | 34 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 38 | 39 | 41 |
| Valenciennes | 34 | 10 | 9 | 15 | 33 | 43 | 39 |
| Nice | 34 | 8 | 14 | 12 | 30 | 34 | 38 |
| Troyes | 34 | 8 | 11 | 15 | 33 | 49 | 35 |
| Sedan | 34 | 6 | 13 | 15 | 41 | 53 | 31 |
| Nantes | 34 | 6 | 12 | 16 | 26 | 45 | 30 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
13 Steve Savidan (Valenciennes)
12 Pauleta (Paris Saint-Germain)
11 Ismael Bangoura (Le Mans)
11 Aruna Dindane (Lens)
11 Fred (Lyon)

### FRENCH CUP – semi-finals
**Apr 17:** Montceau 0 Sochaux 2 (aet).
**Apr 18:** Marseille 3 Nantes 0.

### LEAGUE CUP – Final
*Mar 31 - Saint-Denis*
**Lyon 0**
**Bordeaux 1** (Henrique 89)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 79,000. **Ref:** Piccirillo

## GERMANY

**Friday, March 30**
**Arminia Bielefeld 1** (Kamper 80)
**Borussia Dortmund 0** Att: 26,601

**Saturday, March 31**
**Bayern Munich 2** (Makaay 3, Salihamidzic 78)
**Schalke 0** Att: 69,000

**Energie Cottbus 0**
**Werder Bremen 0** Att: 20,344

**Mainz 1** (Zidan 75)
**Bayer Leverkusen 3** (Barbarez 42, 44, Schneider 52) Att: 20,300

**Monchengladbach 1** (Insua 89)
**Eintracht Frankfurt 1** (Kyrgiakos 13) Att: 52,177

**Nurnberg 2** (Galasek 4, Engelhardt 60)
**Hertha 1** (Gimenez 69) Att: 45,649

**Stuttgart 3** (Streller 29, Lauth 75, Cacau 84)
**Alemannia Aachen 1** (Sichone 59) Att: 43,000

**Sunday, April 1**
**Bochum 2** (Gekas 35, Epalle 42)
**Hannover 0** Att: 24,177

**Hamburg 1** (Mahdavikia 60)
**Wolfsburg 0** Att: 57,000

**Saturday, April 7**
**Alemannia Aachen 1** (Ibisevic 63)
**Borussia Dortmund 4** (Worns 14, Frei 54, 58, Tinga 61) Att: 20,800

**Eintracht Frankfurt 1** (Meier 64)
**Energie Cottbus 3** (Radu 58, Preuss og 76, Munteanu 90) Att: 45,074

**Hamburg 2** (Jarolim 66, Olic 75)
**Stuttgart 4** (Cacau 10, Khedira 13, Hilbert 27, Fernando Meira 50) Att: 57,000

**Hannover 1** (Bruggink 44)
**Bayern Munich 2** (Demichelis 53, Schweinsteiger 71) Att: 49,000

**Hertha 1** (Ebert 71)
**Arminia Bielefeld 1** (Kucera 19) Att: 41,512

**Schalke 2** (Asamoah 57, Kuranyi 71)
**Monchengladbach 0** Att: 61,482

**Wolfsburg 3** (Klimowicz 41, Marcelinho 80, 87)
**Mainz 2** (Zidan pen 21, 79) Att: 20,000

**Sunday, April 8**
**Bayer Leverkusen 1** (Kiessling 62)
**Bochum 4** (Hagui og 8, Yahia 16, Gekas 22, 90) Att: 22,500

**Werder Bremen 1** (Rosenberg 75)
**Nurnberg 0** Att: 40,000

**Friday, April 13**
**Monchengladbach 0**
**Hamburg 1** (Guerrero 90) Att: 53,500

**Saturday, April 14**
**Arminia Bielefeld 2** (Kucera 28, Eigler 81)
**Eintracht Frankfurt 4** (Amanatidis 10, pen 47, Vasoski 33, Heller 90) Att: 24,349

**Bochum 1** (Gekas 1)
**Hertha 3** (Gimenez 57, Gilberto 65, Ede 90) Att: 27,181

**Energie Cottbus 3** (Radu 20, Munteanu 56, Kioyo 57)
**Wolfsburg 2** (Boakye 65, Makiadi 90) Att: 16,293

**Mainz 0**
**Schalke 3** (Kuranyi 10, Asamoah 34, Lincoln 71) Att: 20,300

**Nurnberg 1** (Pagenburg 12)
**Alemannia Aachen 0** Att: 44,298

**Stuttgart 2** (Hilbert 2, Zuraw og 74)
**Hannover 1** (Cherundolo 61) Att: 53,000

**Sunday, April 15**
**Bayern Munich 2** (Van Bommel 30, Makaay 47)
**Bayer Leverkusen 1** (Voronin 60) Att: 69,000

**Borussia Dortmund 0**
**Werder Bremen 2** (Klose 28, Diego 39) Att: 81,000

**Friday, April 20**
**Werder Bremen 3** (D Jensen 50, Rosenberg 55, Diego 90)
**Alemannia Aachen 1** (Pinto 2) Att: 40,300

**Saturday, April 21**
**Bayer Leverkusen 2** (Schneider 19, 59)
**Nurnberg 0** Att: 22,500

**Eintracht Frankfurt 0**
**Bochum 3** (Gekas 32, Epalle 58, 69) Att: 47,962

**Hertha 0**
**Borussia Dortmund 1** (Brzenska 49) Att: 64,382

**Schalke 2** (Rost og 60, Bordon 64)
**Energie Cottbus 0** Att: 61,481

**Stuttgart 2** (Cacau 23, 25)
**Bayern Munich 0** Att: 56,000

**Wolfsburg 2** (Marcelinho 16, Boakye 53)
**Arminia Bielefeld 3** (Westermann 8, Eigler 71, Wichniarek 86) Att: 20,941

**Sunday, April 22**
**Hamburg 2** (Sorin pen 23, Guerrero 83)
**Mainz 2** (Zidan 12, Gerber 59) Att: 57,000

**Hannover 1** (Bruggink 32)
**Monchengladbach 0** Att: 42,000

**Friday, April 27**
**Bochum 2** (Misimovic 33, Gekas 41)
**Schalke 1** (Kuranyi 8) Att: 31,328

**Saturday, April 28**
**Alemannia Aachen 0**
**Hertha 4** (Gilberto 7, Gimenez 48, Pantelic 78, Basturk 81) Att: 20,800

**Bayern Munich 1** (Pizarro 35)
**Hamburg 2** (Van der Vaart 71, Guerrero 77) Att: 69,000

**Borussia Dortmund 2** (Frei 39, 66)
**Eintracht Frankfurt 0** Att: 80,708

**Mainz 1** (Zidan 81)
**Hannover 2** (Bruggink 26, Jankov 50) Att: 20,300

**Monchengladbach 0**
**Stuttgart 1** (Hilbert 53) Att: 48,014

**Nurnberg 1** (Wolf 23)
**Wolfsburg 1** (Krzynowek 18) Att: 46,200

**Sunday, April 29**
**Arminia Bielefeld 3** (Westermann 30, Kamper 61, Eigler 79)
**Werder Bremen 2** (Klose 59, Hugo Almeida 74) Att: 26,601

**Energie Cottbus 2** (Radu 7, Gunkel 84)
**Bayer Leverkusen 1** (Kiessling 44) Att: 18,904

**GERMANY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Schalke | 31 | 19 | 5 | 7 | 50 | 29 | 62 |
| Stuttgart | 31 | 18 | 7 | 6 | 54 | 34 | 61 |
| Werder Bremen | 31 | 18 | 6 | 7 | 69 | 37 | 60 |
| Bayern Munich | 31 | 16 | 5 | 10 | 46 | 37 | 53 |
| Nurnberg | 31 | 10 | 15 | 6 | 40 | 29 | 45 |
| B Leverkusen | 31 | 13 | 6 | 12 | 48 | 44 | 45 |
| Hertha | 31 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 45 | 47 | 41 |
| E Cottbus | 31 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 37 | 42 | 41 |
| Hannover | 31 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 38 | 44 | 41 |
| Hamburg | 31 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 37 | 34 | 39 |
| Bochum | 31 | 11 | 6 | 14 | 42 | 47 | 39 |
| B Dortmund | 31 | 10 | 8 | 13 | 36 | 41 | 38 |
| A Bielefeld | 31 | 9 | 9 | 13 | 41 | 45 | 36 |
| Wolfsburg | 31 | 8 | 12 | 11 | 35 | 39 | 36 |
| E Frankfurt | 31 | 7 | 13 | 11 | 39 | 55 | 34 |
| Alemannia | 31 | 9 | 6 | 16 | 44 | 60 | 33 |
| Mainz | 31 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 29 | 50 | 31 |
| M'gladbach | 31 | 6 | 7 | 18 | 22 | 38 | 25 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
19 Theofanis Gekas (Bochum)
15 Alexander Frei (Borussia Dortmund)
14 Kevin Kuranyi (Schalke)
14 Roy Makaay (Bayern Munich)

### GERMAN CUP – semi-finals
**Apr 17:** Nurnberg 4 Eintracht Frankfurt 0.
**Apr 18:** Wolfsburg 0 Stuttgart 1.

## GREECE

**Apr 15:** Kerkira 0 Iraklis 0; Larisa 0 Olympiakos 0; AEK 5 Aigaleo 2; OFI 2 Ionikos 1; Atromitos 0 Panionios 1; PAOK 1 Xanthi 0; Apollon 1 Panathinaikos 1.
**Apr 18:** Aris 2 Ergotelis 0.
**Apr 22:** Xanthi 4 OFI 1; Panionios 3 PAOK 1; Panathinaikos 0 Aris 1; Olympiakos 3 Kerkira 1; Apollon 1 Atromitos 0; Ionikos 1 AEK 5; Ergotelis 2 Larisa 0; Aigaleo 0 Iraklis 1.
**Apr 29:** OFI 3 Panionios 1; Larisa 1 Panathinaikos 1; Kerkira 5 Ergotelis 1; Iraklis 1 Ionikos 0; Aigaleo 1 Olympiakos 1; Atromitos 2 PAOK 1; Aris 3 Apollon 2; AEK 0 Xanthi 0.

**GREECE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Olympiakos | 29 | 21 | 5 | 3 | 57 | 20 | 68 |
| AEK | 29 | 18 | 8 | 3 | 59 | 24 | 62 |
| Panathinaikos | 29 | 16 | 5 | 8 | 45 | 26 | 53 |
| Aris | 29 | 11 | 13 | 5 | 31 | 24 | 46 |
| PAOK | 29 | 12 | 6 | 11 | 31 | 29 | 42 |
| Panionios | 29 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 30 | 30 | 42 |
| OFI | 29 | 12 | 6 | 11 | 41 | 44 | 42 |
| Atromitos | 29 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 38 | 43 | 37 |
| Xanthi | 29 | 8 | 12 | 9 | 23 | 20 | 36 |
| Ergotelis | 29 | 10 | 6 | 13 | 27 | 32 | 36 |
| Apollon | 29 | 9 | 8 | 12 | 26 | 34 | 35 |
| Kerkira | 29 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 32 | 34 | 34 |
| Larisa | 29 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 28 | 37 | 33 |
| Iraklis | 29 | 9 | 5 | 15 | 23 | 33 | 32 |
| Aigaleo | 29 | 7 | 7 | 15 | 27 | 42 | 28 |
| Ionikos* | 29 | 2 | 3 | 24 | 11 | 57 | 4 |

**5pts deducted – 3pts for club chairman's attack on a referee, 2pts for crowd trouble during a home game*

## HOLLAND

**Friday, March 30**
**Roda JC 0**
**Groningen 1** (Lovre 37) Att: 14,000

**Saturday, March 31**
**AZ 2** (Arveladze 24, Jenner 77)
**RKC 0** Att: 15,000

**NAC 1** (Slot 62)
**PSV 1** (Farfan 74) Att: 16,580

**Willem II 1** (Hadouir 23)
**NEC 0** Att: 13,300

**Sunday, April 1**
**Ajax 3** (Sneijder 11, Huntelaar 50, 52)
**Heracles 0** Att: 50,109

**Excelsior 3** (Simr 10, Rojer 30, Guijo-Velasco 61)
**Den Haag 1** (Kolk 67) Att: 2,825

**Sparta 2** (Roberts 48, Polak pen 74)
**Heerenveen 2** (Hansson 11, Gonzalo 22) Att: 10,800

**Twente 3** (Zomer 10, N'Kufo 25, Bakircioglu 90)
**Utrecht 0** Att: 13,250

**Vitesse 0**
**Feyenoord 1** (Van Hooijdonk 79) Att: 22,900

**Friday, April 6**
**Vitesse 3** (Lazovic pen 4, 83, Verhaegh 20)
**Sparta 0** Att: 21,200

**Saturday, April 7**
**Heerenveen 1** (Afonso Alves 24)
**Den Haag 1** (Kolk 42) Att: 25,000

**NEC 2** (Holman 22, 24)
**PSV 1** (Cocu 61) Att: 12,500

**Roda JC 2** (Kah 48, Oper 90)
**Excelsior 0** Att: 13,613

**Sunday, April 8**
**Feyenoord 0**
**Groningen 4** (Lovre 50, 64, Van de Laak 59, 70) Att: 46,000

**NAC 1** (Penders 45)
**AZ 4** (Koevermans 27, 77, Penders og 54, Martens pen 69) Att: 14,780

**RKC 2** (Vertonghen 10, Berger 71)
**Ajax 2** (Gabri 9, Sneijder 21) Att: 5,000

**Twente 1** (El Ahmadi 22)
**Heracles 1** (Gluscevic 8) Att: 13,250

**Utrecht 3** (Caluwe 14, Somers 29, Cornelisse 66)
**Willem II 0** Att: 21,230

**Friday, April 13**
**Ajax 2** (Perez pen 18, Babel 64)
**NAC 0** Att: 49,737

**Sparta 1** (Roberts 25)
**Utrecht 1** (George 68) Att: 10,000

**Saturday, April 14**
**Den Haag 0**
**Roda JC 2** (De Fauw 48, Meeuwis pen 60) Att: 8,477

**Excelsior 0**
**RKC 3** (Janssen 54, 58, 90) Att: 3,654

**PSV 2** (Farfan 19, 20)
**Twente 0** Att: 33,600

**Sunday, April 15**
**AZ 1** (Arveladze pen 23)
**Vitesse 0** Att: 16,880

**Groningen 4** (Levchenko pen 33, 90, Svejdik 40, Suarez 64)
**NEC 1** (Holman 22) Att: 19,159

**Heracles 4** (Friend 18, 88, Gluscevic 66, Smit 86)
**Feyenoord 1** (Van Hooijdonk 50) Att: 8,500

**Willem II 1** (Cristiano 51)
**Heerenveen 3** (Afonso Alves 49, 52, 69) Att: 13,600

**Sunday, April 22**
**Ajax 5** (Sneijder 9, 18, Huntelaar 21, Perez pen 76, Mitea 82)
**Sparta 2** (Bouaouzan 37, Moreno Freire 47) Att: 50,364

**AZ 3** (Cziommer 14, 89, Martens 38)
**Heerenveen 1** (Afonso Alves 72) Att: 16,272

**Feyenoord 1** (Castelen 53)
**NEC 1** (Denneboom 57) Att: 43,000

**Heracles 3** (Bridji 58, Friend 79, Everton 80)
**Excelsior 2** (Braber 32, Slory 90) Att: 8,500

**NAC 0**
**Roda JC 2** (Kah 35, Ramzi 73) Att: 14,120

**RKC 1** (Janssen 61)
**Willem II 1** (Cristiano 7) Att: 7,000

**Utrecht 1** (Schut 86)
**PSV 1** (Afellay 11) Att: 23,000

**Vitesse 1** (Knol pen 57)
**Twente 1** (N'Kufo 87) Att: 24,250

**Wednesday, April 25**
**Den Haag 1** (Delorge 85)
**Groningen 3** (Nevland 10, 45, Lovre 25)
*Remaining 41 minutes of game abandoned on April 22 because of crowd trouble. The latter minutes were played in Emmen behind closed doors*

**Sunday, April 29**
**Excelsior 3** (Bruins pen 19, Drost 60, Voskamp 90)
**AZ 2** (Cziommer 24, Koevermans 71) Att: 3,527

**Groningen 0**
**Utrecht 2** (Loval 6, Keller 33) Att: 19,500

**Heerenveen 5** (Afonso Alves 32, 65, pen 75, 85, Nilsson 79)
**Feyenoord 1** (Buijs 55) Att: 26,000

**NEC 3** (Denneboom pen 38, Delorge og 70, Jans 74)
**Den Haag 2** (Bodde pen 50, De Vries 81) Att: 12,000

**PSV 5** (Alex 8, Farfan 10, 66, Afellay 59, Cocu 77)
**Vitesse 1** (Janssen 13) Att: 33,500

**Roda JC 7** (Oper 12, 86, Cisse 40, Bosnar og 45, Agustien 53, Vandamme 55, Bodor 62)
**Heracles 0** Att: 17,600

**Sparta 1** (Medunjanin 61)
**RKC 0** Att: 10,125

**Twente 2** (Bakircioglu 12, N'Kufo 76)
**NAC 1** (Slot pen 80) Att: 13,250

**Willem II 0**
**Ajax 2** (Emanuelson 18, Huntelaar 68) Att: 14,700

**HOLLAND – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PSV | 34 | 23 | 6 | 5 | 75 | 25 | 75 |
| Ajax | 34 | 23 | 6 | 5 | 84 | 35 | 75 |
| AZ | 34 | 21 | 9 | 4 | 83 | 31 | 72 |
| Twente | 34 | 19 | 9 | 6 | 67 | 37 | 66 |
| Heerenveen | 34 | 16 | 7 | 11 | 60 | 43 | 55 |
| Roda JC | 34 | 15 | 9 | 10 | 47 | 36 | 54 |
| Feyenoord | 34 | 15 | 8 | 11 | 56 | 66 | 53 |
| Groningen | 34 | 15 | 6 | 13 | 54 | 54 | 51 |
| Utrecht | 34 | 13 | 9 | 12 | 41 | 44 | 48 |
| NEC | 34 | 12 | 8 | 14 | 36 | 44 | 44 |
| NAC | 34 | 12 | 7 | 15 | 43 | 54 | 43 |
| Vitesse | 34 | 10 | 8 | 16 | 50 | 55 | 38 |
| Sparta | 34 | 10 | 7 | 17 | 40 | 66 | 37 |
| Heracles | 34 | 7 | 11 | 16 | 32 | 64 | 32 |
| Willem II | 34 | 8 | 7 | 19 | 31 | 64 | 31 |
| Excelsior | 34 | 8 | 6 | 20 | 43 | 65 | 30 |
| RKC | 34 | 6 | 9 | 19 | 33 | 60 | 27 |
| Den Haag | 34 | 3 | 8 | 23 | 40 | 72 | 17 |

**TOP GOALSCORERS**
34 Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)
22 Danny Koevermans (AZ)
22 Blaise N'Kufo (Twente)
21 Jefferson Farfan (PSV)
21 Klaas Jan Huntelaar (Ajax)
19 Danko Lazovic (Vitesse)

## DUTCH CUP – semi-finals

**Apr 18:** Ajax 3 RKC 1.
**Apr 19:** AZ 6 NAC 0.

## HUNGARY

**Mar 30:** Debrecen 2 Tatabanya 0.
**Mar 31:** Kaposvar 1 MTK 0; Vac 0 Fehervar 2; Pecs 0 Ujpest 1; Paks 2 Gyor 2; Vasas 2 Diosgyor 2; Sopron 2 Rakospalota 3.
**Apr 2:** Zalaegerszeg 3 Honved 2.
**Apr 6:** Fehervar 0 Debrecen 4.
**Apr 7:** Gyor 0 Vasas 2; Rakospalota 1 Pecs 0; Diosgyor 1 Kaposvar 1; Honved 2 Tatabanya 0; Zalaegerszeg 1 Sopron 3.
**Apr 8:** MTK 3 Vac 0.
**Apr 9:** Ujpest 3 Paks 2.
**Apr 13:** Vasas 1 Ujpest 2.
**Apr 14:** Debrecen 3 MTK 0; Tatabanya 3 Fehervar 2; Kaposvar 2 Gyor 1; Vac 1 Diosgyor 0; Paks 1 Rakospalota 1; Pecs 1 Zalaegerszeg 1; Sopron 1 Honved 1.
**Apr 20:** Diosgyor 1 Debrecen 5.
**Apr 21:** MTK 4 Tatabanya 0; Gyor 1 Vac 0; Rakospalota 1 Vasas 3; Ujpest 0 Kaposvar 0; Zalaegerszeg 4 Paks 0; Honved 1 Fehervar 1; Sopron 3 Pecs 1.
**Apr 27:** Vac 3 Ujpest 1.
**Apr 28:** Kaposvar 3 Rakospalota 1; Debrecen 3 Gyor 0; Pecs 1 Honved 1; Vasas 4 Zalaegerszeg 0; Tatabanya 5 Diosgyor 3; Paks 1 Sopron 0.
**Apr 29:** Fehervar 5 MTK 3.

**HUNGARY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Debrecen | 26 | 19 | 3 | 4 | 56 | 17 | 60 |
| MTK | 26 | 16 | 4 | 6 | 50 | 26 | 52 |
| Ujpest | 26 | 14 | 4 | 8 | 35 | 25 | 46 |
| Zalaegerszeg | 26 | 14 | 4 | 8 | 44 | 36 | 46 |
| Vasas | 26 | 12 | 5 | 9 | 35 | 32 | 41 |
| Fehervar | 26 | 11 | 4 | 11 | 38 | 38 | 37 |
| Honved | 26 | 9 | 7 | 10 | 42 | 37 | 34 |
| Kaposvar | 26 | 10 | 4 | 12 | 32 | 30 | 34 |
| Diosgyor | 26 | 10 | 4 | 12 | 35 | 42 | 34 |
| Paks | 26 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 27 | 32 | 31 |
| Pecs | 26 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 25 | 32 | 31 |
| Gyor | 26 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 29 | 37 | 31 |
| Rakospalota | 26 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 33 | 45 | 30 |
| Sopron | 26 | 9 | 3 | 14 | 26 | 41 | 30 |
| Tatabanya | 26 | 9 | 2 | 15 | 39 | 51 | 29 |
| Vac | 26 | 4 | 6 | 16 | 19 | 44 | 18 |

## ITALY

**Saturday, March 31**
**Reggina 0**
**Siena 1** (Bertotto 45) Att: 17,234

**Roma 1** (Mexes 4)
**Milan 1** (Gilardino 62) Att: 43,830

**Sunday, April 1**
**Atalanta 2** (Loria 39, Doni pen 66)
**Fiorentina 2** (Reginaldo 27, Pazzini pen 32) Att: 13,035

**Cagliari 2** (Biondini 12, Budel 24)
**Messina 0** Att: 7,000

**Chievo 1** (Brighi 33)
**Sampdoria 1** (Quagliarella 27) Att: 5,765

**Empoli 4** (Pozzi 45, 75, Saudati pen 53, 72)
**Ascoli 1** (Soncin 51) Att: 4,151

**Inter 2** (Maxwell 56, Crespo 71)
**Parma 0** Att: 38,888

**Livorno 4** (Lucarelli 20, pen 83, 90, Fiore 45)
**Catania 1** (Sottil 14) Att: 5,641

**Torino 0**
**Palermo 0** Att: 20,932

**Udinese 2** (Di Natale pen 58, Iaquinta 90)
**Lazio 4** (Stendardo 18, Mauri 50, Behrami 51, Rocchi pen 59) Att: 13,652

**Saturday, April 7**
**Atalanta 1** (Doni pen 54)
**Chievo 0** Att: 11,845

**Catania 0**
**Roma 2** (Tavano 37, Vucinic 84)
*Match played behind closed doors in Lecce*

**Fiorentina 4** (Reginaldo 5, Montolivo 45, Toni 58, Kroldrup 71)
**Ascoli 0** Att: 29,123

**Lazio 1** (Stendardo 45)
**Messina 0** Att: 23,836

**Milan 3** (Ronaldo 12, Gilardino 44, Favalli 78)
**Empoli 1** (Saudati 43) Att: 45,566

**Palermo 1** (Bresciano 3)
**Cagliari 3** (Suazo pen 37, 86, Pepe 81) Att: 21,655

**Parma 1** (G Rossi 89)
**Livorno 0** Att: 13,080

**Reggina 0**
**Inter 0** Att: 18,506

**Sampdoria 1** (Bonazzoli 17)
**Torino 0** Att: 18,648

**Siena 2** (Maccarone 75, Negro 80)
**Udinese 2** (Di Natale 42, Iaquinta 59) Att: 6,463

**Saturday, April 14**
**Cagliari 0**
**Empoli 0** Att: 10,500

**Udinese 2** (Iaquinta 34, Di Natale 73)
**Chievo 1** (Pellissier 10) Att: 21,804

**Sunday, April 15**
**Ascoli 2** (Soncin 73, Di Biagio pen 79)
**Lazio 2** (Rocchi 76, Jimenez 87) Att: 11,380

**Fiorentina 1** (Mutu 42)
**Siena 0** Att: 33,467

**Inter 2** (Cruz 67, Adriano 74)
**Palermo 2** (Caracciolo 3, Zaccardo 45) Att: 46,611

**Livorno 1** (Lucarelli 28)
**Reggina 1** (Bianchi 31) Att: 8,643

**Messina 1** (Masiello 90)
**Milan 3** (Kaka 14, Favalli 30, Ronaldo 86) Att: 17,521

**Parma 1** (Couto 32)
**Catania 1** (Spinesi 20) Att: 13,427

**Roma 4** (Totti 21, 68, Ferrari 73, Panucci 89)
**Sampdoria 0** Att: 31,875

**Torino 1** (Abbruscato 74)
**Atalanta 2** (Bellini 2, Zampagna 8) Att: 19,845

**Wednesday, April 18**
**Ascoli 2** (Di Biagio 33, Guberti 41)
**Milan 5** (Gilardino 3, 27, Kaka pen 25, 35, Seedorf 75) Att: 15,004

**Empoli 2** (Saudati 35, Almiron 54)
**Atalanta 0** Att: 4,083

**Inter 1** (Materazzi pen 52)
**Roma 3** (Perrotta 44, Totti 89, Cassetti 90) Att: 56,577

**Lazio 0**
**Chievo 0** Att: 19,411

**Livorno 2** (Lucarelli 5, Knezevic 67)
**Cagliari 1** (Suazo pen 61) Att: 7,461

**Parma 2** (G Rossi 27, pen 89)
**Fiorentina 0** Att: 16,853

**Reggina 3** (Bianchi 13, Amoruso 54, pen 72)
**Messina 1** (Rigano pen 27) Att: 15,170

**Siena 1** (Antonini 65)
**Torino 0** Att: 5,978

**Udinese 1** (Iaquinta pen 53)
**Sampdoria 0** Att: 20,527

**Saturday, April 21**
**Milan 3** (Ronaldo 14, 69, Pirlo 80)
**Cagliari 1** (Suazo pen 74) Att: 43,728

**Sampdoria 3** (Ziegler 13, Franceschini 84, Delvecchio 90)
**Messina 1** (Rigano 55) Att: 9,734

**Sunday, April 22**
**Atalanta 2** (Doni 37, Zampagna 44)
**Roma 1** (Perrotta 74) Att: 12,258

**Chievo 2** (Pellissier 57 Bogdani 78)
**Livorno 1** (Lucarelli 18) Att: 5,980

**Empoli 0**
**Torino 0** Att: 6,540

**Lazio 0**
**Fiorentina 1** (Mutu 72) Att: 24,764

**Palermo 3** (Bresciano 36, Di Michele pen 46, Zaccardo 90)
**Parma 4** (Budan 25, Couto 48, Gasbarroni 72, G Rossi 82) Att: 20,650

**Reggina 1** (Amoruso pen 86)
**Udinese 1** (Muntari 26) Att: 7,980

**Siena 1** (Negro 21)
**Inter 2** (Materazzi 18, pen 61) Att: 14,027

**Saturday, April 28**
**Fiorentina 1** (Reginaldo 64)
**Chievo 0** Att: 28,724

**Torino 0**
**Milan 1** (Seedorf 26) Att: 22,539

**Sunday, April 29**
**Ascoli 2** (Fini 15, Bonanni 84)
**Reggina 3** (Amoruso 24, 32, Foggia 54) Att: 6,120

**Inter 3** (Cruz 27, Recoba 59, Stankovic 60)
**Empoli 1** (Saudati 57) Att: 60,534

**Livorno 1** (Cesar pen 58)
**Palermo 2** (Corini pen 48, Di Michele 76) Att: 5,890

**Messina 0**
**Atalanta 0** Att: 4,000

**Parma 2** (Budan 28, Gasbarroni pen 80)
**Cagliari 1** (Suazo 70) Att: 15,230

**Roma 0**
**Lazio 0** Att: 61,000

**Siena 0**
**Sampdoria 2** (Maggio 39, Delvecchio 89) Att: 6,500





**Udinese 0**
**Catania 1** (Spinesi pen 52) Att: 13,340

**Wednesday, May 2**
**Catania 3** (Mascara 21, Caserta 69, Spinesi pen 77)
**Ascoli 3** (Boudianski 36, Perrulli 51, Zanetti 53)
*Match played behind closed doors in Verona*

**ITALY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inter | 34 | 27 | 6 | 1 | 71 | 30 | 87 |
| Roma | 34 | 20 | 9 | 5 | 66 | 26 | 69 |
| Milan* | 34 | 19 | 10 | 5 | 54 | 30 | 59 |
| Lazio* | 34 | 17 | 10 | 7 | 54 | 27 | 58 |
| Palermo | 34 | 14 | 10 | 10 | 51 | 44 | 52 |
| Fiorentina* | 34 | 19 | 8 | 7 | 54 | 28 | 50 |
| Empoli | 34 | 13 | 11 | 10 | 36 | 34 | 50 |
| Sampdoria | 34 | 12 | 9 | 13 | 42 | 42 | 45 |
| Atalanta | 34 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 47 | 46 | 43 |
| Udinese | 34 | 11 | 10 | 13 | 42 | 46 | 43 |
| Catania | 34 | 9 | 10 | 15 | 42 | 64 | 37 |
| Livorno | 34 | 8 | 12 | 14 | 36 | 51 | 36 |
| Parma | 34 | 8 | 11 | 15 | 34 | 53 | 35 |
| Reggina* | 34 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 46 | 46 | 34 |
| Siena* | 34 | 7 | 14 | 13 | 29 | 39 | 34 |
| Cagliari | 34 | 7 | 13 | 14 | 29 | 40 | 34 |
| Torino | 34 | 8 | 9 | 17 | 25 | 44 | 33 |
| Chievo | 34 | 7 | 11 | 16 | 35 | 45 | 32 |
| Messina | 34 | 5 | 10 | 19 | 31 | 58 | 25 |
| Ascoli | 34 | 3 | 12 | 19 | 31 | 62 | 21 |

**Milan had 8pts deducted, Lazio 3pts, Reggina 11pts and Fiorentina 15pts for their part in the country's match-fixing scandal. Siena had 1pt deducted for late payment of taxes*

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
21 Francesco Totti (Roma)
18 Cristiano Lucarelli (Livorno)
17 Rolando Bianchi (Reggina)
16 Luca Toni (Fiorentina)
15 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Inter)
15 Adrian Mutu (Fiorentina)
15 Tommaso Rocchi (Lazio)
15 Gionatha Spinesi (Catania)

## NORWAY

**Apr 9:** Lillestrom 3 Fredrikstad 0; Lyn 3 Sandefjord 0; Stromsgodset 2 Odd Grenland 1; Aalesund 2 Start 4; Tromso 1 Valerenga 0; Viking 1 Rosenborg 1.
**Apr 10:** Stabaek 0 Brann 1.
**Apr 14:** Fredrikstad 3 Lyn 1.
**Apr 15:** Valerenga 1 Stabaek 1; Odd Grenland 0 Lillestrom 1; Rosenborg 4 Tromso 3; Sandefjord 3 Aalesund 0; Start 1 Viking 1.
**Apr 16:** Brann 3 Stromsgodset 1.
**Apr 21:** Stabaek 2 Rosenborg 1.
**Apr 22:** Tromso 1 Start 1; Viking 0 Sandefjord 0; Aalesund 3 Fredrikstad 3; Lyn 3 Odd Grenland 1; Brann 4 Valerenga 1.
**Apr 23:** Stromsgodset 1 Lillestrom 1.
**Apr 28:** Valerenga 0 Stromsgodset 0.
**Apr 29:** Start 1 Stabaek 1; Sandefjord 2 Tromso 1; Rosenborg 3 Brann 0; Odd Grenland 3 Aalesund 0; Fredrikstad 2 Viking 0.
**Apr 30:** Lillestrom 3 Lyn 1.

**NORWAY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lillestrom | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Brann | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 9 |
| Rosenborg | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 7 |
| Fredrikstad | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Sandefjord | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Start | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| Lyn | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| Stabaek | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Stromsgodset | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Tromso | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 4 |
| Odd Grenland | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Viking | 4 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Valerenga | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| Aalesund | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 1 |

## POLAND

**Mar 30:** Cracovia 3 Lech 0.
**Mar 31:** Zaglebie 2 Groclin 1; Widzew 2 Gornik Z 1; Odra 1 Belchatow 0; Pogon 1 Wisla P 2; Korona 0 Wisla K 0.
**Apr 1:** Legia 2 LKS 1.
**Apr 5:** Belchatow 3 Zaglebie 1.
**Apr 7:** Korona 2 Pogon 1; Gornik Z 1 Legia 0; LKS 1 Odra 1; Groclin 0 Cracovia 0; Wisla K 0 Lech 0.
**Apr 13:** Zaglebie 1 LKS 1.
**Apr 14:** Lech 2 Groclin 2; Widzew 0 Wisla P 0; Gornik L 1 Korona 3; Odra 0 Gornik Z 0; Pogon 1 Wisla K 1; Legia 3 Arka 0.
**Apr 15:** Cracovia 2 Belchatow 1.
**Apr 17:** Wisla P 0 Legia 3; Korona 3 Widzew 0.
**Apr 18:** LKS 2 Cracovia 1; Gornik Z 0 Zaglebie 3; Arka 0 Odra 1; Wisla K 2 Gornik L 1; Lech 3 Pogon 0; Belchatow 1 Groclin 0.
**Apr 20:** Legia 3 Korona 0.
**Apr 21:** Gornik L 3 Pogon 2; Odra 1 Wisla P 0; Zaglebie 6 Arka 0; Cracovia 3 Gornik Z 1; Groclin 2 LKS 0; Belchatow 0 Lech 0.
**Apr 22:** Widzew 0 Wisla K 0.
**Apr 27:** Wisla K 3 Legia 1.
**Apr 28:** Arka 4 Cracovia 2; Wisla P 0 Zaglebie 2; Korona 0 Odra 1; Pogon 0 Widzew 1; Lech 1 Gornik L 0; Gornik Z 2 Groclin 3.
**Apr 29:** LKS 0 Belchatow 1.

**POLAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belchatow | 24 | 15 | 4 | 5 | 49 | 22 | 49 |
| Zaglebie | 24 | 14 | 7 | 3 | 42 | 22 | 49 |
| Korona | 24 | 13 | 4 | 7 | 34 | 24 | 43 |
| Wisla K | 24 | 9 | 13 | 2 | 38 | 18 | 40 |
| Legia | 24 | 12 | 4 | 8 | 42 | 25 | 40 |
| LKS | 24 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 26 | 23 | 36 |
| Cracovia | 24 | 10 | 5 | 9 | 34 | 37 | 35 |
| Lech | 24 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 39 | 29 | 34 |
| Groclin | 24 | 6 | 14 | 4 | 27 | 23 | 32 |
| Odra | 24 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 19 | 30 | 27 |
| Arka | 22 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 26 | 31 | 25 |
| Widzew | 23 | 6 | 7 | 10 | 19 | 28 | 25 |
| Gornik Z | 24 | 5 | 5 | 14 | 25 | 42 | 20 |
| Gornik L | 22 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 17 | 43 | 20 |
| Pogon | 24 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 19 | 34 | 16 |
| Wisla P | 23 | 2 | 9 | 12 | 14 | 39 | 15 |

## PORTUGAL

**Saturday, March 31**
**Belenenses 1** (Dady 17)
**Aves 0**

**Boavista 3** (Kazmierczak 37, Linz 58, 73)
**Pacos Ferreira 1** (Antunes 60)

**Sunday, April 1**
**Academica 0**
**Uniao Leiria 0**

**Benfica 1** (Gonzalez og 83)
**FC Porto 1** (Pepe 41)

**Maritimo 1** (Marcinho 5)
**Sporting Braga 2** (Wender 27, Maciel 90)

**Naval 0**
**Nacional 0**

**Setubal 2** (Pedro Simoes og 22, Amuneke 67)
**Estrela Amadora 0**

**Monday, April 2**
**Sporting Lisbon 2** (Abel 15, Liedson 33)
**Beira Mar 0**

**Friday, April 6**
**FC Porto 5** (Jorginho 4, Adriano 16, 36, Helder Postiga 21, Anderson 77)
**Setubal 1** (Bruno Ribeiro 61)

**Saturday, April 7**
**Aves 1** (Moreira 60)
**Boavista 0**

**Estrela Amadora 3** (Anselmo 27, Dario 43, Jaime Junior pen 67)
**Academica 3** (Claudio Pitbull 5, Joeano 54, 65)

**Maritimo 1** (Gregory 13)
**Naval 1** (Pimenta 81)

**Pacos Ferreira 2** (Geraldo 74, 85)
**Nacional 1** (Leandro Bomfim 6)

**Sporting Braga 0**
**Sporting Lisbon 1** (Nani 52)

**Uniao Leiria 0**
**Belenenses 1** (Dady 67)

**Monday, April 9**
**Beira Mar 2** (Ratinho 24, Delibasic 87)
**Benfica 2** (Mantorras 83, Simao pen 90)

**Friday, April 13**
**Sporting Lisbon 4** (Liedson 1, Romagnoli 18, Joao Moutinho 80, Alecsandro 87)
**Maritimo 0**

**Saturday, April 14**
**Academica 1** (Lino pen 76)
**FC Porto 2** (Bruno Alves 42, Adriano 70)

**Belenenses 3** (Garces 14, 33, Dady 17)
**Estrela Amadora 0**

**Sunday, April 15**
**Boavista 1** (Helder Rosario 82)
**Uniao Leiria 1** (Cadu da Silva 59)

**Nacional 3** (Cassio 13, Diego Benaglio 89, 90)
**Aves 4** (Filipe Anunciacao 61, Sergio 77, 78, Moreira 80)

**Naval 1** (Saulo 42)
**Pacos Ferreira 1** (Renato Queiros 86)

**Setubal 1** (Sandro 14)
**Beira Mar 3** (Edgar 55, 82, Ratinho 79)

**Monday, April 16**
**Benfica 0**
**Sporting Braga 0**

**Friday, April 20**
**Estrela Amadora 2** (Moses 61, Luis Loureiro 70)
**Boavista 1** (Helder Rosario 65)

**Saturday, April 21**
**Maritimo 0**
**Benfica 3** (Miccoli 55, 79, Katsouranis pen 90)

**Sunday, April 22**
**Aves 0**
**Pacos Ferreira 1** (Ricardinho 88)

**FC Porto 3** (Adriano 9, Gonzalez pen 45, Bruno Alves 86)
**Belenenses 1** (Nivaldo 50)

**Sporting Lisbon 4** (Alecsandro 11, 14, 80, Joao Moutinho pen 90)
**Naval 0**

**Uniao Leiria 1** (Slusarski 62)
**Nacional 0**

**Monday, April 23**
**Beira Mar 0**
**Academica 1** (Gyano 83)

**Sporting Braga 0**
**Setubal 0**

**Friday, April 27**
**Pacos Ferreira 0**
**Uniao Leiria 0**

**Saturday, April 28**
**Belenenses 2** (Garces 17, Dady 90)
**Beira Mar 0**

**Boavista 2** (Ricardo Silva 15, Jose Manuel 51)
**FC Porto 1** (Gonzalez pen 73)

**Sunday, April 29**
**Benfica 1** (Miccoli 24)
**Sporting Lisbon 1** (Liedson 2)

**Nacional 1** (Juliano Spadacio pen 90)
**Estrela Amadora 0**

**Naval 0**
**Aves 1** (Jorge Ribeiro 56)

**Setubal 1** (Varela 66)
**Maritimo 1** (Lipatin 52)

**Monday, April 30**
**Academica 0**
**Sporting Braga 1** (Ze Carlos 67)

**PORTUGAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FC Porto | 27 | 20 | 2 | 5 | 58 | 18 | 62 |
| Sporting Lisbon | 27 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 45 | 14 | 59 |
| Benfica | 27 | 17 | 7 | 3 | 50 | 19 | 58 |
| Belenenses | 27 | 14 | 4 | 9 | 33 | 23 | 46 |
| Sporting Braga | 27 | 12 | 7 | 8 | 31 | 28 | 43 |
| Pacos Ferreira | 27 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 29 | 33 | 40 |
| Uniao Leiria | 27 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 19 | 23 | 36 |
| Nacional | 27 | 10 | 5 | 12 | 37 | 35 | 35 |
| Boavista | 27 | 7 | 11 | 9 | 30 | 31 | 32 |
| Naval | 27 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 24 | 31 | 31 |
| Maritimo | 27 | 8 | 7 | 12 | 29 | 40 | 31 |
| E Amadora | 27 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 20 | 35 | 28 |
| Academica | 27 | 6 | 7 | 14 | 28 | 42 | 25 |
| Aves | 27 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 20 | 34 | 22 |
| Setubal | 27 | 4 | 9 | 14 | 18 | 40 | 21 |
| Beira Mar | 27 | 3 | 10 | 14 | 26 | 51 | 19 |

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GOLDEN SHOE

**STANDINGS ON APRIL 29**

| POS | | TEAM | GOALS | FACTOR | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Afonso Alves | Heerenveen (Hol) | 34 | 1.5 | 51 |
| 2 | Francesco Totti | Roma (Ita) | 21 | 2 | 42 |
| 3 | Didier Drogba | Chelsea (Eng) | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | Theofanis Gekas | Bochum (Ger) | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | Frederic Kanoute | Sevilla (Spa) | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | Diego Milito | Zaragoza (Spa) | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| 7 | Cristiano Lucarelli | Livorno (Ita) | 18 | 2 | 36 |
| | Ruud Van Nistelrooy | Real Madrid (Spa) | 18 | 2 | 36 |
| 9 | Rolando Bianchi | Reggina (Ita) | 17 | 2 | 34 |
| | Ronaldinho | Barcelona (Spa) | 17 | 2 | 34 |
| 11 | Danny Koevermans | AZ (Hol) | 22 | 1.5 | 33 |
| | Blaise N'Kufo | Twente (Hol) | 22 | 1.5 | 33 |
| 13 | Cristiano Ronaldo | Manchester United (Eng) | 16 | 2 | 32 |
| | Luca Toni | Fiorentina (Ita) | 16 | 2 | 32 |
| 15 | Jefferson Farfan | PSV (Hol) | 21 | 1.5 | 31.5 |
| | Klaas Jan Huntelaar | Ajax (Hol) | 21 | 1.5 | 31.5 |
| | Alexander Zickler | Salzburg (Aut) | 21 | 1.5 | 31.5 |
| 18 | Maksim Gruznov | Trans Narva (Est) | 31 | 1 | 31 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
11 Liedson (Sporting Lisbon)
11 Simao Sabrosa (Benfica)
10 Dady (Belenenses)
10 Helder Postiga (FC Porto)

## PORTUGUESE CUP – semi-finals

Apr 18: Sporting Lisbon 2 Beira Mar 1.
Apr 19: Belenenses 2 Sporting Braga 1 (aet).

## ROMANIA

Mar 30: Ceahlaul 1 National 1.
Mar 31: Gloria 1 UTA 0; Dinamo 0 Vaslui 0; Otelul 2 Jiul 1; Poli Iasi 1 U Craiova 1.
Apr 1: Farul 1 Arges 1; Urziceni 1 Pandurii 0; CFR Cluj 2 Poli Timisoara 1; Rapid 2 Steaua 3.
Apr 5: UTA 0 Poli Iasi 0; Pandurii 1 Ceahlaul 0; National 2 Farul 0.
Apr 6: Jiul 0 Urziceni 1; Vaslui 3 Gloria 2; Poli Timisoara 1 Otelul 0; U Craiova 0 CFR Cluj 1.
Apr 7: Arges 1 Rapid 2; Steaua 2 Dinamo 4.
Apr 13: Urziceni 2 Poli Timisoara 0; National 0 Pandurii 1.
Apr 14: Gloria 2 Steaua 0; CFR Cluj 5 UTA 0; Otelul 4 U Craiova 1; Farul 1 Rapid 2.
Apr 15: Dinamo 2 Arges 1; Poli Iasi 2 Vaslui 0; Ceahlaul 1 Jiul 0.
Apr 20: Jiul 2 National 0.
Apr 21: U Craiova 0 Urziceni 0; Vaslui 0 CFR Cluj 0; Arges 2 Gloria 0; Steaua 1 Poli Iasi 0.
Apr 22: UTA 1 Otelul 1; Poli Timisoara 2 Ceahlaul 0; Pandurii 1 Farul 0; Rapid 1 Dinamo 4.
Apr 24: Poli Iasi 1 Arges 0.
Apr 25: National 0 Poli Timisoara 2; Ceahlaul 0 U Craiova 2; Urziceni 1 UTA 0; Pandurii 2 Jiul 0; Otelul 2 Vaslui 0; Farul 1 Dinamo 1.
Apr 26: CFR Cluj 1 Steaua 2; Gloria 3 Rapid 3.
Apr 28: Vaslui 0 Urziceni 0; U Craiova 1 National 0; Poli Timisoara 1 Pandurii 0.
Apr 29: Steaua 3 Otelul 0; UTA 1 Ceahlaul 0; Jiul 1 Farul 2; Arges 0 CFR Cluj 0; Dinamo 2 Gloria 0.
Apr 30: Rapid 3 Poli Iasi 0.

**ROMANIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dinamo | 29 | 22 | 6 | 1 | 57 | 17 | 72 |
| CFR Cluj | 29 | 17 | 6 | 6 | 52 | 28 | 57 |
| Steaua | 29 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 51 | 21 | 56 |
| Rapid | 29 | 15 | 9 | 5 | 53 | 27 | 54 |
| Gloria | 29 | 14 | 5 | 10 | 38 | 31 | 47 |
| Poli Timisoara | 29 | 13 | 7 | 9 | 29 | 23 | 46 |
| Otelul | 29 | 13 | 4 | 12 | 45 | 49 | 43 |
| Urziceni | 29 | 12 | 6 | 11 | 25 | 23 | 42 |
| Pandurii | 29 | 12 | 5 | 12 | 23 | 26 | 41 |
| Vaslui | 29 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 32 | 38 | 40 |
| Poli Iasi | 29 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 32 | 33 | 39 |
| U Craiova | 29 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 28 | 41 | 35 |
| Farul | 29 | 7 | 11 | 11 | 28 | 31 | 32 |
| UTA | 29 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 20 | 33 | 32 |
| Ceahlaul | 29 | 7 | 5 | 17 | 20 | 42 | 26 |
| Arges | 29 | 5 | 7 | 17 | 19 | 35 | 22 |
| National | 29 | 4 | 6 | 19 | 19 | 46 | 18 |
| Jiul | 29 | 4 | 5 | 20 | 13 | 40 | 17 |

## RUSSIA

Mar 31: Zenit 1 Spartak Moscow 3; Tom 1 Saturn 1; Kryliya Sovetov 0 FC Moscow 0; Amkar 1 Dinamo 1; CSKA 2 Lokomotiv 0; Rubin 2 Khimki 1.
Apr 1: Luch-Energiya 1 Rostov 1; Kuban 2 Spartak Nalchik 2.
Apr 7: Dinamo 2 Lokomotiv 1; Saturn 1 Kryliya Sovetov 1; FC Moscow 1 Kuban 0.
Apr 8: Khimki 1 CSKA 1; Amkar 1 Zenit 1; Rostov 2 Tom 2; Spartak Nalchik 1 Rubin 0; Spartak Moscow 2 Luch-Energiya 1.
Apr 13: Kuban 2 Saturn 2.
Apr 14: Luch-Energiya 1 Amkar 0; Zenit 3 Dinamo 0; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Rostov 1; Rubin 1 FC Moscow 1; Lokomotiv 1 Khimki 0.
Apr 15: CSKA 2 Spartak Nalchik 0; Tom 1 Spartak Moscow 1.
Apr 21: Dinamo 2 Khimki 1; Saturn 1 Rubin 0; Rostov 0 Kuban 1; Amkar 3 Tom 3.
Apr 22: Spartak Nalchik 0 Lokomotiv 0; FC Moscow 2 CSKA 1; Spartak Moscow 1 Kryliya Sovetov 0; Zenit 0 Luch-Energiya 1.
Apr 28: Khimki 1 Spartak Nalchik 0; Lokomotiv 1 FC Moscow 1; Tom 0 Zenit 1; Luch-Energiya 0 Dinamo 1.
Apr 29: CSKA 3 Saturn 1; Rubin 0 Rostov 0; Kuban 0 Spartak Moscow 0; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Amkar 0.

**RUSSIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FC Moscow | 7 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 15 |
| Spartak M | 7 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 15 |
| CSKA | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 13 | 6 | 14 |
| Zenit | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 7 | 14 |
| Dinamo | 7 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 11 |
| Kryliya Sovetov | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| Lokomotiv | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 9 |
| Amkar | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| Tom | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 10 | 7 |
| Kuban | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Saturn | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 7 |
| Khimki | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| Luch-Energiya | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Rostov | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 6 |
| Spartak N | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| Rubin | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 5 |

## SCOTLAND

**Saturday, March 31**
**Dundee United 1** (Daly 90)
**Celtic 1** (Nakamura 48) Att: 11,363

**Falkirk 2** (Moutinho 20, O'Donnell 40)
**St Mirren 0** Att: 5,863

**Kilmarnock 1** (Naismith pen 86)
**Aberdeen 2** (Fowler og 59, Anderson 69) Att: 7,236

**Motherwell 2** (McDonald pen 51, 62)
**Dunfermline 0** Att: 4,511

**Rangers 1** (Adam 15)
**Inverness 1** (Dargo 82) Att: 50,278

**Sunday, April 1**
**Hibernian 0**
**Hearts 1** (Zaliukas 81) Att: 15,953

**Tuesday, April 3**
**Motherwell 0**
**Kilmarnock 1** (Nish 90) Att: 3,784

**Wednesday, April 4**
**St Mirren 1** (Sutton 89)
**Hibernian 1** (Jones 20) Att: 4,031

**Saturday, April 7**
**Aberdeen 2** (Lovell 8, Mackie pen 10)
**Dundee United 4** (Daly pen 1, Hunt 14, Cameron 17, 51) Att: 12,148

**Celtic 1** (Riordan 52)
**Motherwell 0** Att: 58,654

**Dunfermline 1** (McGuire 84)
**Hibernian 0** Att: 6,001

**Hearts 1** (Pospisil 78)
**Kilmarnock 0** Att: 17,019

**Inverness 1** (Rankin 86)
**Falkirk 1** (Finnigan 80) Att: 4,435

**Sunday, April 8**
**St Mirren 0**
**Rangers 1** (Novo 4) Att: 7,308

**Saturday, April 21**
**Aberdeen 2** (Anderson 25, Foster 80)
**Hibernian 2** (Gray 19, Shiels 44) Att: 9,753

**Dunfermline 1** (McManus 34)
**Dundee United 0** Att: 5,131

**Inverness 2** (Dargo 14, 44)
**Motherwell 0** Att: 3,804

**Rangers 2** (Rae 52, Ferguson 79)
**Hearts 1** (Velicka 16) Att: 50,099

**Sunday, April 22**
**Kilmarnock 1** (Nish 50)
**Celtic 2** (Vennegoor of Hesselink 24, Nakamura 90) Att: 13,673

**Monday, April 23**
**Falkirk 0**
**St Mirren 2** (Kean pen 37, Brady 57) Att: 4,441

**Saturday, April 28**
**Aberdeen 3** (Nicholson pen 7, Miller 49, Mackie 62)
**Kilmarnock 0** Att: 10,046

**Dundee United 1** (Robertson 41)
**Inverness 1** (Paatelainen 58) Att: 5,273

**Hibernian 3** (Fletcher 20, McCann 45, Whittaker 62)
**Rangers 3** (Adam 24, 78, Hutton 54) Att: 16,747

**Motherwell 3** (D Smith 18, McDonald 37, Clarkson 58)
**Falkirk 3** (Scobbie 48, Craigan og 49, Cregg 55) Att: 3,640

**Sunday, April 29**
**Celtic 1** (Pressley 63)
**Hearts 3** (Ivaskevicius 57, Driver 61, Pospisil pen 71) Att: 59,510

**Monday, April 30**
**St Mirren 0**
**Dunfermline 1** (McManus 58) Att: 10,251

**SCOTLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Celtic | 35 | 25 | 6 | 4 | 62 | 29 | 81 |
| Rangers | 35 | 20 | 9 | 6 | 59 | 29 | 69 |
| Aberdeen | 35 | 18 | 7 | 10 | 51 | 35 | 61 |
| Hearts | 35 | 16 | 9 | 10 | 44 | 33 | 57 |
| Hibernian | 35 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 54 | 42 | 46 |
| Kilmarnock | 35 | 13 | 7 | 15 | 44 | 54 | 46 |

**RELEGATION PLAY-OFFS**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Falkirk | 35 | 12 | 5 | 18 | 43 | 47 | 41 |
| Dundee Utd | 35 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 40 | 55 | 41 |
| Inverness | 35 | 9 | 13 | 13 | 39 | 46 | 40 |
| Motherwell | 35 | 10 | 7 | 18 | 38 | 54 | 37 |
| St Mirren | 35 | 6 | 12 | 17 | 26 | 48 | 30 |
| Dunfermline | 35 | 7 | 8 | 20 | 21 | 49 | 29 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
19 Kris Boyd (Rangers)
14 Scott McDonald (Motherwell)
13 Chris Killen (Hibernian)
13 Steven Naismith (Kilmarnock)
12 Darren Mackie (Aberdeen)
12 Colin Nish (Kilmarnock)

## SCOTTISH CUP – semi-finals

Apr 14: St Johnstone 1 Celtic 2.
Apr 15: Hibernian 0 Dunfermline 0.

*Replay*
Apr 24: Dunfermline 1 Hibernian 0.

## SERBIA

### Regular season

Mar 31: Vozdovac 0 Bezanija 1; Hajduk K 2 Banat 1; Smederevo 2 OFK 1.
Apr 1: Red Star 2 Mladost 0; Borac 0 Partizan 1; Zemun 1 Vojvodina 4.

**SERBIA – REGULAR – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Red Star | 22 | 16 | 3 | 3 | 37 | 16 | 51 |
| Partizan | 22 | 13 | 3 | 6 | 32 | 20 | 42 |
| Vojvodina | 22 | 11 | 4 | 7 | 23 | 16 | 37 |
| Mladost | 22 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 19 | 13 | 35 |
| Hajduk K | 22 | 11 | 2 | 9 | 21 | 21 | 35 |
| Bezanija | 22 | 7 | 12 | 3 | 24 | 17 | 33 |
| OFK | 22 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 28 | 16 | 32 |
| Banat | 22 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 20 | 27 | 29 |
| Smederevo | 22 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 17 | 21 | 25 |
| Borac | 22 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 17 | 22 |
| Vozdovac | 22 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 16 | 31 | 18 |
| Zemun | 22 | 0 | 3 | 19 | 8 | 40 | 3 |

*Top six entered championship play-offs; bottom six entered relegation play-offs*

### Championship play-offs

Apr 7: Partizan 2 Hajduk K 0; Vojvodina 4 Mladost 1; Red Star 1 Bezanija 3.
Apr 11: Bezanija 1 Mladost 0; Hajduk K 0 Vojvodina 0; Red Star 1 Partizan 0.
Apr 14: Vojvodina 0 Red Star 0; Partizan 1 Bezanija 0.
Apr 15: Mladost 1 Hajduk K 0.
Apr 21: Bezanija 1 Hajduk K 0; Red Star 2 Mladost 1.
Apr 22: Partizan 1 Vojvodina 0.
Apr 27: Mladost 0 Partizan 2.
Apr 28: Hajduk K 1 Red Star 2; Vojvodina 3 Bezanija 0.
May 2: Mladost 0 Vojvodina 1; Hajduk K 3 Partizan 0; Bezanija 2 Red Star 4.

**SERBIA – CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Red Star | 28 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 47 | 23 | 64 |
| Partizan | 28 | 17 | 3 | 8 | 38 | 24 | 54 |
| Vojvodina | 28 | 14 | 6 | 8 | 31 | 18 | 48 |
| Bezanija | 28 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 31 | 26 | 42 |
| Hajduk K | 28 | 12 | 3 | 13 | 25 | 27 | 39 |
| Mladost | 28 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 22 | 23 | 38 |

## SPAIN

**Saturday, March 31**
**Barcelona 2** (Messi 45, Eto'o 52)
**Deportivo La Coruna 1** (Adrian 69) Att: 63,827

**Betis 3** (Fernando 9, Edu 72, Juanito 90)
**Villarreal 3** (Forlan 1, 47, Pires 77) Att: 50,000

**Real Sociedad 1** (Ansotegi 38)
**Levante 0** Att: 25,242

**Valencia 3** (Villa 12, Vicente 26, Angulo 59)
**Espanyol 2** (Riera 14, Luis Garcia 63) Att: 40,000

**Sunday, April 1**
**Atletico Madrid 1** (Fernando Torres 15)
**Mallorca 1** (Arango 52) Att: 40,000

**Celta Vigo 1** (Angel 43)
**Real Madrid 2** (Van Nistelrooy pen 26, Robinho 82) Att: 22,000

**Getafe 2** (Del Moral 43, Javi Casquero 60)
**Zaragoza 2** (Sergio Garcia 21, D'Alessandro 35) Att: 12,000

**Gimnastic 1** (Portillo 15)
**Recreativo 1** (Sinama-Pongolle 10) Att: 10,000

**Osasuna 0**
**Sevilla 0** Att: 16,673

**Racing Santander 5** (Christian 58, Garay pen 65, Zigic 69, 89, Iraola og 77)
**Athletic Bilbao 4** (Luis Prieto 7, Etxeberria 62, 79, Iraola 82) Att: 19,126

**Saturday, April 7**
**Athletic Bilbao 1** (Gabilondo 28)
**Valencia 0** Att: 33,000

**Zaragoza 1** (D Milito 56)
**Barcelona 0** Att: 29,000

**Sunday, April 8**
**Deportivo La Coruna 1** (Iago 58)
**Gimnastic 0** Att: 8,000

**Espanyol 1** (Corominas 57)
**Real Sociedad 0** Att: 15,150

**Levante 1** (Descarga 33)
**Betis 1** (Robert 79) Att: 18,183

**Mallorca 2** (Nunes 63, Trejo 89)
**Getafe 0** Att: 18,000

**Real Madrid 2** (Raul 23, Robinho 79)
**Osasuna 0** Att: 72,000

**Recreativo 4** (Jesus pen 37, Rosu 40, 42, Uche 90)
**Celta Vigo 2** (Nene pen 75, 89) Att: 17,000

**Sevilla 0**
**Racing Santander 0** Att: 45,000

**Villarreal 0**
**Atletico Madrid 1** (Fabiano Eller 32) Att: 20,000

**Saturday, April 14**
**Betis 0**
**Real Sociedad 1** (Garrido 32) Att: 45,000

**Racing Santander 2** (Garay pen 72, pen 89)
**Real Madrid 1** (Raul 32) Att: 21,741

**Sunday, April 15**
**Athletic Bilbao 2** (Urzaiz 62, 78)
**Espanyol 1** (Jonatas 3) Att: 38,000

**Atletico Madrid 1** (Fernando Torres 60)
**Levante 0** Att: 50,000

**Barcelona 1** (Fernando Navarro og 88)
**Mallorca 0** Att: 70,441





**Celta Vigo 1** (Fernando Baiano 62)
**Deportivo La Coruna 0** Att: 24,000

**Getafe 3** (Javi Casquero 31, Verpakovskis 64, Pachon 81)
**Villarreal 0** Att: 13,000

**Gimnastic 1** (Portillo 81)
**Zaragoza 0** Att: 14,000

**Osasuna 1** (Crutxaga 55)
**Recreativo 1** (Sinama-Pongolle 51) Att: 16,785

**Valencia 2** (Villa 26, pen 49)
**Sevilla 0** Att: 45,000

**Saturday, April 21**
**Real Madrid 2** (Van Nistelrooy 18, Sergio Ramos 73)
**Valencia 1** (Morientes 52) Att: 75,000

**Real Sociedad 2** (Kovacevic 7, Savio 84)
**Atletico Madrid 0** Att: 27,426

**Sunday, April 22**
**Deportivo La Coruna 1** (Lopo 90)
**Osasuna 0** Att: 12,000

**Espanyol 2** (Riera 9, Tamudo pen 90)
**Betis 2** (Edu 44, 76) Att: 20,150

**Levante 1** (Riga Mustapha 3)
**Getafe 1** (Belenguer 56) Att: 22,192

**Mallorca 1** (Victor 20)
**Gimnastic 0** Att: 17,000

**Recreativo 4** (Uche 2, Pablo Amo 32, Santi Cazorla 39, Rosu 64)
**Racing Santander 2** (Colsa 8, Zigic 67) Att: 17,000

**Sevilla 4** (Kerzhakov 49, Puerta 54, Chevanton 69, Luis Fabiano 82)
**Athletic Bilbao 1** (Yeste 77) Att: 43,000

**Villarreal 2** (Pires 56, Marcos Garcia 85)
**Barcelona 0** Att: 25,000

**Zaragoza 2** (Ewerthon 72, 75)
**Celta Vigo 0** Att: 29,000

**Saturday, April 28**
**Atletico Madrid 0**
**Betis 0** Att: 35,000

**Valencia 2** (Joaquin 60, 63)
**Recreativo 0** Att: 40,000

**Sunday, April 29**
**Athletic Bilbao 1** (Llorente 81)
**Real Madrid 4** (Sergio Ramos 13, Van Nistelrooy 34, 49, Guti 84) Att: 27,000

**Barcelona 1** (Eto'o 28)
**Levante 0** Att: 73,863

**Celta Vigo 0**
**Mallorca 3** (Arango 10, Varela 22, Maxi Lopez 78) Att: 17,000

**Getafe 1** (Alexis 70)
**Real Sociedad 0** Att: 10,000

**Gimnastic 0**
**Villarreal 3** (Forlan 18, 77, Fernandez 90) Att: 12,000

**Osasuna 2** (Juanlu 1, Valdo 55)
**Zaragoza 2** (Aimar 11, Sergio Garcia 90) Att: 17,000

**Racing Santander 0**
**Deportivo La Coruna 0** Att: 18,221

**Sevilla 3** (Puerta 51, Chevanton 53, Marti 74)
**Espanyol 1** (Corominas 60) Att: 45,000

**SPAIN**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barcelona | 32 | 18 | 8 | 6 | 61 | 29 | 62 |
| Sevilla | 32 | 18 | 7 | 7 | 55 | 28 | 61 |
| Real Madrid | 32 | 18 | 6 | 8 | 48 | 29 | 60 |
| Valencia | 32 | 17 | 5 | 10 | 45 | 31 | 56 |
| Zaragoza | 32 | 15 | 9 | 8 | 47 | 32 | 54 |
| Atletico Madrid | 32 | 14 | 9 | 9 | 35 | 26 | 51 |
| Recreativo | 32 | 14 | 7 | 11 | 45 | 43 | 49 |
| R Santander | 32 | 12 | 12 | 8 | 39 | 39 | 48 |
| Getafe | 32 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 30 | 24 | 46 |
| Villarreal | 32 | 12 | 8 | 12 | 34 | 39 | 44 |
| Dep La Coruna | 32 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 23 | 31 | 43 |
| Espanyol | 32 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 36 | 38 | 42 |
| Mallorca | 32 | 12 | 6 | 14 | 35 | 41 | 42 |
| Osasuna | 32 | 10 | 7 | 15 | 37 | 39 | 37 |
| Betis | 32 | 7 | 14 | 11 | 31 | 38 | 35 |
| Athletic Bilbao | 32 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 36 | 54 | 32 |
| Levante | 32 | 6 | 12 | 14 | 25 | 42 | 30 |
| Celta Vigo | 32 | 7 | 9 | 16 | 31 | 49 | 30 |
| Real Sociedad | 32 | 6 | 9 | 17 | 23 | 38 | 27 |
| Gimnastic | 32 | 6 | 6 | 20 | 30 | 56 | 24 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
19 Frederic Kanoute (Sevilla)
19 Diego Milito (Zaragoza)
18 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)
17 Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
13 David Villa (Valencia)
12 Diego Forlan (Villarreal)
12 Fernando Morientes (Valencia)

## SPANISH CUP – semi-finals

*1st legs - Apr 18/19*
Barcelona v Getafe 5-2
Deportivo La Coruna v Sevilla 0-3

## SWEDEN

Apr 6: Brommapojkarna 1 Djurgardens 0; Trelleborgs 1 IFK Gothenburg 1.
Apr 7: Elfsborg 1 Malmo 1.
Apr 9: AIK 0 Kalmar 1; Gefle 0 Orebro 0; Halmstads 2 Helsingborgs 1.
Apr 10: GAIS 1 Hammarby 1.
Apr 14: Hammarby 3 Trelleborgs 0.
Apr 15: Kalmar 2 Brommapojkarna 2.
Apr 16: Malmo 1 GAIS 0; Djurgardens 2 Halmstads 0; Helsingborgs 3 Gefle 1.
Apr 17: IFK Gothenburg 1 AIK 2; Orebro 1 Elfsborg 1.
Apr 21: Djurgardens 3 Helsingborgs 1.
Apr 22: Trelleborgs 2 Malmo 1; Halmstads 2 Kalmar 1.
Apr 23: Elfsborg 1 Gefle 1; Brommapojkarna 1 IFK Gothenburg 2; GAIS 1 Orebro 1.
Apr 24: AIK 1 Hammarby 0.
Apr 28: Malmo 4 AIK 0.
Apr 29: Kalmar 1 Djurgardens 0; Hammarby 4 Brommapojkarna 0.
Apr 30: Orebro 2 Trelleborgs 0; IFK Gothenburg 1 Halmstads 1; Gefle 1 GAIS 0.
May 1: Helsingborgs 0 Elfsborg 1.

**SWEDEN**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hammarby | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 7 |
| Malmo | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 7 |
| Kalmar | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Halmstads | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Djurgardens | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| Orebro | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Elfsborg | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| AIK | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| IFK Gothenburg | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Gefle | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Bromm'karna | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| Trelleborgs | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Helsingborgs | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| GAIS | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 |

## SWITZERLAND

Mar 31: Lucerne 0 Schaffhausen 0; Young Boys 1 Grasshopper 0.
Apr 1: Zurich 3 St Gallen 0 (awarded); Basle 4 Thun 1; Sion 1 Aarau 1.
Apr 7: Schaffhausen 0 Young Boys 1; St Gallen 0 Grasshopper 0; Thun 1 Sion 3.
Apr 9: Zurich 0 Basle 1; Aarau 4 Lucerne 1.
Apr 14: Basle 3 St Gallen 3; Lucerne 1 Thun 2; Young Boys 1 Aarau 1.
Apr 15: Sion 1 Zurich 2; Grasshopper 1 Schaffhausen 2.
Apr 17: St Gallen 0 Basle 0.
Apr 18: Zurich 2 Sion 1; Thun 2 Lucerne 1; Schaffhausen 1 Grasshopper 1; Aarau 1 Young Boys 1.
Apr 21: Young Boys 2 Schaffhausen 0; Grasshopper 1 St Gallen 1.
Apr 22: Sion 2 Thun 1; Lucerne 1 Aarau 0; Basle 4 Zurich 2.
Apr 28: Grasshopper 1 Young Boys 2; Aarau 0 Sion 2.
Apr 29: Thun 0 Basle 2; St Gallen 2 Zurich 2; Schaffhausen 0 Lucerne 0.

**SWITZERLAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zurich | 30 | 19 | 4 | 7 | 57 | 30 | 61 |
| Basle | 30 | 17 | 7 | 6 | 63 | 38 | 58 |
| Young Boys | 30 | 15 | 7 | 8 | 45 | 33 | 52 |
| St Gallen | 30 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 41 | 37 | 48 |
| Sion | 30 | 13 | 8 | 9 | 47 | 40 | 47 |
| Grasshopper | 30 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 48 | 32 | 45 |
| Lucerne | 30 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 28 | 41 | 32 |
| Thun | 30 | 7 | 6 | 17 | 24 | 55 | 27 |
| Schaffhausen | 30 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 24 | 48 | 22 |
| Aarau | 30 | 5 | 6 | 19 | 25 | 48 | 21 |

## TURKEY

Mar 17: Manisaspor 0 Sakaryaspor 3 (awarded).
Apr 1: Rizespor 2 Denizlispor 2; Sakaryaspor 1 Gaziantepspor 2; Bursaspor 1 Konyaspor 0; Antalyaspor 1 Manisaspor 0; Sivasspor 3 Kayserispor 2; Fenerbahce 2 Ankaraspor 1; Ankaragucu 1 Galatasaray 2.
Apr 2: Erciyesspor 0 Trabzonspor 1; Genclerbirligi 0 Besiktas 2.
Apr 6: Galatasaray 0 Erciyesspor 1.
Apr 7: Trabzonspor 4 Genclerbirligi 3; Kayserispor 2 Fenerbahce 2; Besiktas 1 Rizespor 0.
Apr 8: Gaziantepspor 0 Antalyaspor 0; Manisaspor 1 Sivasspor 0; Konyaspor 2 Ankaragucu 0; Ankaraspor 0 Bursaspor 0; Denizlispor 1 Sakaryaspor 0.
Apr 13: Genclerbirligi 1 Galatasaray 3.
Apr 14: Sakaryaspor 1 Besiktas 1.
Apr 15: Bursaspor 0 Kayserispor 3; Rizespor 3 Trabzonspor 2; Erciyesspor 0 Ankaragucu 1; Ankaraspor 4 Konyaspor 2; Sivasspor 2 Gaziantepspor 1; Antalyaspor 1 Denizlispor 1; Fenerbahce 0 Manisaspor 0.
Apr 20: Gaziantepspor 0 Fenerbahce 2.
Apr 21: Besiktas 1 Antalyaspor 0; Konyaspor 1 Erciyesspor 1; Trabzonspor 5 Sakaryaspor 2.
Apr 22: Manisaspor 4 Bursaspor 1; Kayserispor 3 Ankaraspor 3; Ankaragucu 0 Genclerbirligi 0; Galatasaray 3 Rizespor 1; Denizlispor 2 Sivasspor 0.
Apr 28: Kayserispor 2 Konyaspor 1; Sakaryaspor 0 Galatasaray 3; Rizespor 3 Ankaragucu 1; Genclerbirligi 1 Erciyesspor 2; Ankaraspor 1 Manisaspor 1; Antalyaspor 1 Trabzonspor 2; Bursaspor 1 Gaziantepspor 1.
Apr 29: Sivasspor 0 Besiktas 1; Fenerbahce 2 Denizlispor 2.

**TURKEY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fenerbahce | 30 | 17 | 9 | 4 | 57 | 27 | 60 |
| Besiktas | 30 | 17 | 7 | 6 | 41 | 24 | 58 |
| Galatasaray | 30 | 15 | 9 | 6 | 55 | 31 | 54 |
| Kayserispor | 30 | 12 | 12 | 6 | 49 | 38 | 48 |
| Trabzonspor | 30 | 13 | 6 | 11 | 46 | 39 | 45 |
| Sivasspor | 30 | 12 | 5 | 13 | 34 | 39 | 41 |
| Ankaraspor | 30 | 8 | 16 | 6 | 37 | 34 | 40 |
| Konyaspor | 30 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 39 | 40 | 39 |
| Genclerbirligi | 30 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 36 | 38 | 39 |
| Bursaspor | 30 | 10 | 8 | 12 | 30 | 39 | 38 |
| Antalyaspor | 30 | 8 | 13 | 9 | 30 | 31 | 37 |
| Manisaspor | 30 | 10 | 7 | 13 | 40 | 44 | 37 |
| Ankaragucu | 30 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 28 | 32 | 36 |
| Gaziantepspor | 30 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 27 | 36 | 36 |
| Rizespor | 30 | 10 | 5 | 15 | 30 | 36 | 35 |
| Denizlispor | 30 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 30 | 38 | 35 |
| Erciyesspor | 30 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 25 | 45 | 32 |
| Sakaryaspor | 30 | 4 | 9 | 17 | 23 | 46 | 21 |

## UKRAINE

Mar 19: Karpaty 0 Metalist 0 (awarded; goalless win to Metalist).
Mar 31: Tavriya 2 Stal 1.
Apr 1: Kryvbas 1 Metalurh Z 1; Arsenal 1 Dnipro 1; Zorya 0 Chornomorets 4; Metalist 0 Dynamo 2; Vorskla 0 FC Kharkiv 1; Illichivets 1 Shakhtar 1.
Apr 2: Metalurh D 3 Karpaty 3.
Apr 6: Dynamo 0 Metalurh D 0.
Apr 7: Kryvbas 1 Arsenal 0; Karpaty 1 Illichivets 0; Stal 3 Dnipro 1; Chornomorets 1 Metalist 3; Metalurh Z 1 Zorya 0; FC Kharkiv 1 Tavriya 1; Shakhtar 2 Vorskla 1.
Apr 14: Tavriya 1 Shakhtar 3; Metalist 1 Metalurh Z 0; Illichivets 2 Dynamo 3.
Apr 15: Dnipro 1 FC Kharkiv 0; Zorya 2 Kryvbas 1; Vorskla 1 Karpaty 2; Arsenal 1 Stal 3; Metalurh D 1 Chornomorets 0.
Apr 21: Metalurh Z 2 Metalurh D 0; Chornomorets 2 Illichivets 1.
Apr 22: FC Kharkiv 0 Stal 0; Zorya 2 Arsenal 1; Kryvbas 0 Metalist 3; Dynamo 1 Vorskla 1; Karpaty 0 Tavriya 2.
Apr 23: Shakhtar 2 Dnipro 3.
Apr 28: Metalurh D 2 Kryvbas 1; Tavriya 2 Dynamo 4.
Apr 29: Arsenal 1 FC Kharkiv 1; Illichivets 1 Metalurh Z 0; Metalist 1 Zorya 0; Stal 0 Shakhtar 2; Dnipro 2 Karpaty 2; Vorskla 0 Chornomorets 0.

**UKRAINE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dynamo | 24 | 18 | 6 | 0 | 56 | 19 | 60 |
| Shakhtar | 24 | 18 | 3 | 3 | 52 | 13 | 57 |
| Metalist | 24 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 26 | 17 | 45 |
| Dnipro | 24 | 9 | 12 | 3 | 26 | 18 | 39 |
| Tavriya | 24 | 10 | 4 | 10 | 24 | 26 | 34 |
| Karpaty | 24 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 22 | 26 | 32 |
| Chornomorets | 24 | 8 | 6 | 10 | 31 | 32 | 30 |
| Kryvbas | 24 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 26 | 31 | 29 |
| Metalurh D | 24 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 22 | 29 | 29 |
| Metalurh Z | 24 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 17 | 25 | 29 |
| Arsenal | 24 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 23 | 30 | 27 |
| FC Kharkiv | 24 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 21 | 31 | 26 |
| Vorskla | 24 | 5 | 6 | 13 | 16 | 25 | 21 |
| Illichivets | 24 | 5 | 6 | 13 | 19 | 30 | 21 |
| Zorya | 24 | 5 | 6 | 13 | 18 | 39 | 21 |
| Stal | 24 | 5 | 5 | 14 | 20 | 28 | 20 |

# SOUTH AMERICA

## LIBERTADORES CUP

### Group 1

*Apr 3*
**El Nacional (Ecu) 0**
**Banfield (Arg) 1** (Quinteros 79)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)

*Apr 11*
**Libertad (Par) 1** (Lopez pen 7)
**America (Mex) 2** (Cabanas 63, 75)
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
*Sent off: Guinazu (Libertad) 44min; Bilos (America) 84min*

*Apr 18*
**Banfield 0**
**Libertad 1** (Marin 55)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)

*Apr 18*
**America 2** (Cabanas 30, Fernandez 67)
**El Nacional 1** (Ayovi 17)
**HT:** 1-1. **Ref:** Andarcia (Ven)

**GROUP 1 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Libertad | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| America | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 12 | 10 | 12 |
| Banfield | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| El Nacional | 6 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 1 |

Feb 20 El Nacional-America ..... 1-2
Feb 20 Libertad-Banfield ..... 1-0

*Apr 18*
**Alianza Lima (Per) 0**
**Sao Paulo 1** (Borges 45)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Intriago (Ecu)

*Apr 25*
**Sao Paulo 2** (Richarlyson 6, Aloisio 67)
**Audax Italiano 2** (Di Santo 59, Moya 71)
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

*Apr 25*
**Necaxa 2** (Kleber Boas 7, Salgueiro 48)
**Alianza Lima 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)

**GROUP 2 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Necaxa | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 12 |
| Sao Paulo | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 4 | 11 |
| Audax Italiano | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 11 |
| Alianza Lima | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 13 | 0 |

Feb 14 Audax Italiano-Sao Paulo ..... 0-0
Feb 20 Alianza Lima-Necaxa ..... 1-2
Feb 28 Necaxa-Audax Italiano ..... 2-0
Feb 28 Sao Paulo-Alianza Lima ..... 4-0
Mar 13 Alianza Lima-Audax Italiano ..... 1-3
Mar 21 Necaxa-Sao Paulo ..... 2-1
Mar 27 Audax Italiano-Alianza Lima ..... 1-0
Apr 4 Sao Paulo-Necaxa ..... 3-0
Apr 11 Audax Italiano-Necaxa ..... 2-1
Apr 18 Alianza Lima-Sao Paulo ..... 0-1
Apr 25 Sao Paulo-Audax Italiano ..... 2-2
Apr 25 Necaxa-Alianza Lima ..... 2-0

**Group 3**

*Apr 10*
**Cerro Porteno (Par) 1** (Morinigo 81)
**Tolima (Col) 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
*Sent off: Anchico (Tolima) 58min*

*Apr 11*
**Cucuta (Col) 3** (Bustos 43, Perez 73, Del Castillo 87)
**Gremio (Bra) 1** (Moreno og 51)
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)

*Apr 24*
**Gremio 1** (Everton 69)
**Cerro Porteno 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)

*Apr 24*
**Tolima 3** (Charria 38, 63, Quintero 49)
**Cucuta 4** (Del Castillo 19, Martinez 41, Perez 70, 86)
**HT:** 1-2. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)

**GROUP 3 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gremio | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 10 |
| Cucuta | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 9 |
| Tolima | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Cerro Porteno | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 |

Feb 13 Cucuta-Tolima ..... 0-0
Feb 15 Cerro Porteno-Gremio ..... 0-1
Feb 27 Gremio-Cucuta ..... 0-0
Mar 7 Tolima-Cerro Porteno ..... 1-0
Mar 13 Cucuta-Cerro Porteno ..... 1-1
Mar 15 Tolima-Gremio ..... 1-0
Mar 20 Cerro Porteno-Cucuta ..... 2-1
Mar 27 Gremio-Tolima ..... 1-0
Apr 10 Cerro Porteno-Tolima ..... 1-0
Apr 11 Cucuta-Gremio ..... 3-1
Apr 24 Gremio-Cerro Porteno ..... 1-0
Apr 24 Tolima-Cucuta ..... 3-4

**Group 4**

*Apr 3*
**Nacional (Uru) 3** (Viana 19, Delgado 30, Juarez 45)
**Emelec (Ecu) 1** (Morales Neumann 90)
**HT:** 3-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

*Apr 10*
**Emelec 1** (Arroyo 45)
**Internacional (Bra) 2** (Iarley 36, Alexandre Pato 52)
**HT:** 1-1. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)
*Sent off: Arroyo (Emelec) 87min*

*Apr 12*
**Nacional 2** (Godin 33, Castro 75)
**Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

*Apr 19*
**Internacional 1** (Fernandao 80)
**Nacional 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Selman (Chl)
*Sent off: Indio (Internacional) 65min*

*Apr 19*
**Velez Sarsfield 1** (Escudero 64)
**Emelec 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Grance (Par)

**GROUP 4 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Velez Sarsfield | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 11 |
| Nacional | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 10 |
| Internacional | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 10 |
| Emelec | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 10 | 3 |

Feb 13 Emelec-Velez Sarsfield ..... 0-1
Feb 21 Nacional-Internacional ..... 3-1
Feb 28 Internacional-Emelec ..... 3-0
Feb 28 Velez Sarsfield-Nacional ..... 1-1
Mar 14 Velez Sarsfield-Internacional ..... 3-0
Mar 22 Emelec-Nacional ..... 1-0
Mar 28 Internacional-Velez Sarsfield ..... 0-0
Apr 3 Nacional-Emelec ..... 3-1
Apr 10 Emelec-Internacional ..... 1-2
Apr 12 Nacional-Velez Sarsfield ..... 2-0
Apr 19 Internacional-Nacional ..... 1-0
Apr 19 Velez Sarsfield-Emelec ..... 1-0

**Group 5**

*Apr 4*
**UA Maracaibo (Ven) 1** (Paulinho og 77)
**Flamengo (Bra) 2** (Renato 12, Renato Augusto 81)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

*Apr 10*
**Real Potosi (Bol) 3** (Rodriguez 23, Brandan 70, Monteiro 75)
**Parana (Bra) 1** (Gerson 29)
**HT:** 1-1. **Ref:** Grance (Par)

*Apr 18*
**Flamengo 1** (Souza 12)
**Real Potosi 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Prudente (Uru)

*Apr 18*
**Parana 2** (Egidio 7, Beto 14)
**UA Maracaibo 1** (Machado 70)
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Pompei (Arg)

**GROUP 5 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Flamengo | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 10 | 4 | 16 |
| Parana | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| Real Potosi | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 6 |
| UA Maracaibo | 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 2 |

Feb 14 Real Potosi-Flamengo ..... 2-2
Feb 15 UA Maracaibo-Parana ..... 2-4
Feb 21 Parana-Real Potosi ..... 2-0
Feb 21 Flamengo-UA Maracaibo ..... 3-1
Mar 13 UA Maracaibo-Real Potosi ..... 1-1
Mar 14 Parana-Flamengo ..... 0-1
Mar 20 Real Potosi-UA Maracaibo ..... 2-2
Mar 21 Flamengo-Parana ..... 1-0
Apr 4 UA Maracaibo-Flamengo ..... 1-2
Apr 10 Real Potosi-Parana ..... 3-1
Apr 18 Flamengo-Real Potosi ..... 1-0
Apr 18 Parana-UA Maracaibo ..... 2-1

**Group 6**

*Apr 3*
**Colo Colo (Chl) 4** (Fierro pen 50, 72, Suazo 65, Millar 78)
**LDU Quito (Ecu) 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)

*Apr 5*
**Caracas (Ven) 3** (Rey 15, Escobar 32, 36)
**River Plate (Arg) 1** (Farias 28)
**HT:** 3-1. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
*Sent off: Lucena (Caracas) 42min; Zapata (River) 42min*

*Apr 25*
**River Plate 1** (Galvan 62)
**Colo Colo 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Oliveira (Bra)

*Apr 25*
**LDU Quito 3** (Ayovi 23, Campos 40, Guerron 55)
**Caracas 1** (Gonzalez 63)
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Buckley (Per)

**GROUP 6 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colo Colo | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 12 | 7 | 9 |
| Caracas | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 9 |
| LDU Quito | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| River Plate | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 |

Feb 22 Caracas-LDU Quito ..... 1-0
Feb 22 Colo Colo-River Plate ..... 1-2
Mar 7 LDU Quito-Colo Colo ..... 3-1
Mar 8 River Plate-Caracas ..... 0-1
Mar 15 LDU Quito-River Plate ..... 1-1
Mar 20 Caracas-Colo Colo ..... 0-4
Mar 29 River Plate-LDU Quito ..... 0-0
Mar 30 Colo Colo-Caracas ..... 2-1
Apr 3 Colo Colo-LDU Quito ..... 4-0
Apr 5 Caracas-River Plate ..... 3-1
Apr 25 River Plate-Colo Colo ..... 1-0
Apr 25 LDU Quito-Caracas ..... 3-1

**Group 7**

*Apr 4*
**Cienciano (Per) 3** (Gonzalez Vigil 48, Mostto 79, Torres 90)
**Boca Juniors (Arg) 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
*Sent off: Cardozo (Boca) 38min; Mostto (Cienciano) 83min*

*Apr 12*
**Bolivar (Bol) 0**
**Toluca (Mex) 2** (Ponce 14, Sanchez 88)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Arias (Par)

*Apr 26*
**Boca Juniors 7** (Palacio 32, 45, Palermo pen 37, Tordoya og 51, Datolo 57, Marioni 64, 85)
**Bolivar 0**
**HT:** 3-0. **Ref:** Grance (Par)

*Apr 26*
**Toluca 3** (Morales 32, 48, Sanchez 70)
**Cienciano 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

**GROUP 7 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Toluca | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 12 |
| Boca Juniors | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 5 | 10 |
| Cienciano | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| Bolivar | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 18 | 4 |

Feb 14 Bolivar-Boca Juniors ..... 0-0
Feb 21 Cienciano-Toluca ..... 1-2
Feb 27 Toluca-Bolivar ..... 1-2
Mar 1 Boca Juniors-Cienciano ..... 1-0
Mar 8 Cienciano-Bolivar ..... 5-1
Mar 14 Toluca-Boca Juniors ..... 2-0
Mar 22 Boca Juniors-Toluca ..... 3-0
Mar 28 Bolivar-Cienciano ..... 2-3
Apr 4 Cienciano-Boca Juniors ..... 3-0
Apr 12 Bolivar-Toluca ..... 0-2
Apr 26 Boca Juniors-Bolivar ..... 7-0
Apr 26 Toluca-Cienciano ..... 3-0

**Group 8**

*Apr 5*
**Defensor Sporting (Uru) 0**
**Santos (Bra) 2** (Marcos Aurelio 68, Rodrigo Tabata 84)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Arias (Par)

*Apr 5*
**Deportivo Pasto (Col) 0**
**Gimnasia La Plata (Arg) 2** (Pacheco 15, Leal 75)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Intriago (Ecu)
*Sent off: J O Ramos (Pasto) 58min*

*Apr 19*
**Gimnasia La Plata 3** (Leguizamon 24, 72, Ithurralde og 44)
**Defensor Sporting 0**
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)

*Apr 19*
**Santos 3** (Carlinhos 7, Pedrinho 45, Rodrigo Tiui 84)
**Deportivo Pasto 0**
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Maldonado (Bol)

**GROUP 8 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Santos | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 1 | 18 |
| Defensor | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 9 |
| Gimnasia LP | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 10 | 9 |
| Dep Pasto | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 14 | 0 |

Feb 13 Defensor-Gimnasia LP ..... 3-0
Feb 21 Dep Pasto-Santos ..... 0-1
Mar 1 Santos-Defensor ..... 1-0
Mar 6 Gimnasia LP-Dep Pasto ..... 3-2
Mar 14 Santos-Gimnasia LP ..... 3-0
Mar 15 Dep Pasto-Defensor ..... 1-2
Mar 22 Gimnasia LP-Santos ..... 1-2
Mar 28 Defensor-Dep Pasto ..... 3-0
Apr 5 Defensor-Santos ..... 0-2
Apr 5 Dep Pasto-Gimnasia LP ..... 0-2
Apr 19 Gimnasia LP-Defensor ..... 3-0
Apr 19 Santos-Dep Pasto ..... 3-0

*Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round*

## ARGENTINA

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Friday, March 30**
**Banfield 0**
**Godoy Cruz 0**

**Saturday, March 31**
**Boca Juniors 2** (Rodriguez 55, Cardozo 64)
**Nueva Chicago 0**

**Sunday, April 1**
**Arsenal 0**
**Argentinos Juniors 2** (Desabato 33, Choy 81)

**Belgrano 3** (Oyola 9, Suarez 54, Porcari 77)
**Velez Sarsfield 0**

**Gimnasia J 0**
**Newell's Old Boys 1** (Cardozo 90)

**Independiente 0**
**Estudiantes 0**

**San Lorenzo 1** (Silvera 17)
**Lanus 0**

**Friday, April 6**
**Racing Club 0**
**Gimnasia J 1** (Almada 48)

**Saturday, April 7**
**Argentinos Juniors 1** (Hauche 37)
**Quilmes 1** (Batalla 71)

**Estudiantes 2** (Piatti 45, Sosa 76)
**San Lorenzo 1** (Lavezzi 90)

**Sunday, April 8**
**Gimnasia LP 4** (Silva 21, Leguizamon 53, 55, Leal 59)
**Independiente 1** (Sosa 89)

**Godoy Cruz 2** (Arzuaga pen 37, Villar 90)
**Rosario Central 1** (Diaz 90)

**Lanus 0**
**Arsenal 0**

**Newell's Old Boys 1** (Cardozo 89)
**Colon Santa Fe 3** (Ramirez 2, Centurion 16, Grisales 82)

**River Plate 1** (Fernandez 80)
**Belgrano 1** (Delgado pen 29)

**Velez Sarsfield 1** (Pellegrino 78)
**Boca Juniors 3** (Cardozo 2, Palacio 26, 79)

**Friday, April 13**
**Colon Santa Fe 1** (Reynoso 84)
**Racing Club 1** (Bergessio 25)

**Saturday, April 14**
**Independiente 0**
**Godoy Cruz 2** (Torresi pen 70, Villar 71)

**San Lorenzo 1** (Fernandez 17)
**Gimnasia LP 0**

**Sunday, April 15**
**Banfield 2** (Sanguinetti 38, Cvitanich 76)
**Velez Sarsfield 3** (Escudero 3, 4, Balvorin 17)

**Belgrano 0**
**Newell's Old Boys 2** (Cardozo 9, 77)

**Boca Juniors 1** (Ledesma 1)
**River Plate 1** (Rosales 50)

**Estudiantes 0**
**Lanus 0**

**Gimnasia J 0**
**Argentinos Juniors 0**

**Rosario Central 3** (Kily Gonzalez pen 7, Diaz 57, Belloso 62)
**Nueva Chicago 0**

**Friday, April 20**
**Argentinos Juniors 1** (Niell 74)
**Colon Santa Fe 1** (Sand 68)

**Arsenal 1** (Raymonda pen 57)
**Gimnasia J 0**

**Saturday, April 21**
**Nueva Chicago 0**
**Independiente 0**

**Sunday, April 22**
**Gimnasia LP 1** (Landa 38)
**Estudiantes 2** (Pavone pen 41, 63)

**Godoy Cruz 1** (Villar 40)
**San Lorenzo 2** (Silvera 14, 74)

**Newell's Old Boys 1** (Arrieta 90)
**Boca Juniors 2** (Palermo pen 63, Palacio 81)

**Racing Club 3** (Bergessio 21, 67, Pellerano 65)
**Belgrano 3** (Rios 22, Yllana 38, Manzanelli 51)

**River Plate 2** (Ferrari pen 12, Belluschi 69)
**Banfield 1** (Tuzzio og 20)

**Velez Sarsfield 0**
**Rosario Central 2** (Belloso 7, Di Maria 28)

**Wednesday, April 25**
**Nueva Chicago 2** (Cardozo 18, Zarif 24)
**Banfield 1** (Luchetti pen 9)
*Remaining 63 minutes of game abandoned on April 7 because of a power cut*

**Rosario Central 1** (Belloso 29)
**Gimnasia LP 0**

**Friday, April 27**
**Belgrano 0**
**Argentinos Juniors 2** (Barzola 41, Nunez 75)

**Colon Santa Fe 1** (Esmerado 20)
**Arsenal 1** (Llama 84)

**Estudiantes 1** (Luguercio 72)
**Godoy Cruz 0**

**Saturday, April 28**
**Gimnasia J 2** (Soler 34, Gomez 90)
**Quilmes 1** (Luna 79)

**Independiente 1** (Montenegro 87)
**Velez Sarsfield 0**

**Rosario Central 0**
**River Plate 2** (Ruben 21, 82)

**Sunday, April 29**
**Banfield 4** (Cvitanich 9, 23, 26, Andrizzi 83)
**Newell's Old Boys 0**

**Boca Juniors 2** (Riquelme 55, Palermo pen 59)
**Racing Club 2** (Bergessio 25, Sava pen 90)

**Gimnasia LP 0**
**Lanus 1** (Biglieri 51)

**San Lorenzo 3** (Gonzalez 27, 42, Lavezzi 45)
**Nueva Chicago 2** (Higuain pen 65, Filomeno 70)

**Wednesday, May 2**
**Colon Santa Fe 0**
**River Plate 0**

**Quilmes 2** (Luna 57, Garcia 59)
**Racing Club 3** (Romero 25, Moralez 49, Bergessio 90)

**ARGENTINA – CLOSING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| San Lorenzo | 12 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 22 | 11 | 31 |
| Boca Juniors | 12 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 27 | 12 | 27 |
| Estudiantes | 12 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 17 | 8 | 25 |
| River Plate | 12 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 17 | 10 | 24 |
| Argentinos Jnrs | 12 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 15 | 8 | 21 |
| Arsenal | 11 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 18 | 12 | 18 |
| Lanus | 11 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 11 | 17 |
| Godoy Cruz | 12 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 16 | 12 | 16 |
| Newell's OB | 12 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 16 |
| Gimnasia J | 12 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 15 |
| Rosario Central | 12 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 12 | 15 | 14 |
| Velez Sarsfield | 12 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 12 | 19 | 14 |
| Colon Santa Fe | 12 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 15 | 15 | 13 |
| Racing Club | 12 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 18 | 21 | 12 |
| Independiente | 12 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 11 | 18 | 12 |
| Nueva Chicago | 12 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 19 | 12 |
| Banfield | 12 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 14 | 19 | 11 |
| Gimnasia LP | 12 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 14 | 19 | 11 |
| Belgrano | 12 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 13 | 18 | 10 |
| Quilmes | 10 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 17 | 6 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
10 Martin Palermo (Boca Juniors)
8 Oscar Cardozo (Newell's Old Boys)
6 Dario Cvitanich (Banfield)
6 Gaston Fernandez (San Lorenzo)
6 Andres Silvera (San Lorenzo)

## BOLIVIA

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 31:** The Strongest 0 San Jose 1; Blooming 1 Bolivar 0.
**Apr 1:** La Paz 1 Real Potosi 0; Destroyers 1 Aurora 1; Jorge Wilstermann 1 Oriente 1; Universitario 4 Real Mamore 0.
**Apr 4:** Aurora 0 Real Potosi 1; Bolivar 1 Destroyers 0; Real Mamore 3 Jorge Wilstermann 1; San Jose 2 Blooming 0; Universitario 1 La Paz 0.
**Apr 5:** Oriente 4 The Strongest 1.
**Apr 7:** The Strongest 5 Real Mamore 0.
**Apr 8:** Blooming 2 Oriente 1; La Paz 2 Aurora 2; Real Potosi 6 Bolivar 2; Jorge Wilstermann 0 Universitario 0.
**Apr 9:** Destroyers 3 San Jose 2.
**Apr 15:** Jorge Wilstermann 0 La Paz 0; San Jose 1 Real Potosi 1; Bolivar 2 Aurora 1; Universitario 1 The Strongest 3; Real Mamore 2 Blooming 2; Oriente 1 Destroyers 1.
**Apr 18:** Blooming 1 Universitario 0; Destroyers 3 Real Mamore 2; La Paz 3 Bolivar 1; Aurora 2 San Jose 0.
**Apr 19:** The Strongest 1 Jorge Wilstermann 1.
**Apr 21:** Jorge Wilstermann 2 Blooming 0.
**Apr 22:** San Jose 1 Bolivar 1; Real Mamore 3 Real Potosi 1; Oriente 1 Aurora 0; The Strongest 0 La Paz 4; Universitario 3 Destroyers 0.
**Apr 25:** Blooming 2 The Strongest 0; La Paz 3 San Jose 2; Destroyers 2 Jorge Wilstermann 1.
**Apr 26:** Real Potosi 3 Universitario 2.
**Apr 29:** Jorge Wilstermann 1 Real Potosi 0; Bolivar 4 Real Mamore 1; San Jose 9 Oriente 2; Blooming 2 La Paz 0.
**Apr 30:** Destroyers 1 The Strongest 2.
**May 1:** Aurora 1 Universitario 0.
**May 2:** Bolivar 1 Oriente 1.
**May 3:** Real Potosi 3 The Strongest 4.

**BOLIVIA – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| La Paz | 12 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 19 | 11 | 21 |
| J Wilstermann | 12 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 16 | 12 | 21 |
| Blooming | 12 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 15 | 16 | 19 |
| Universitario | 12 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 21 | 16 | 17 |
| Oriente | 11 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 17 | 19 | 17 |
| The Strongest | 12 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 25 | 22 | 16 |
| Aurora | 11 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 17 | 14 | 15 |
| Real Potosi | 11 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 19 | 19 | 15 |
| Destroyers | 12 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 15 |
| San Jose | 12 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 21 | 18 | 14 |
| Bolivar | 12 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 16 | 20 | 13 |
| Real Mamore | 11 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 15 | 28 | 9 |

## CHILE

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 25:** Puerto Montt 2 Union Espanola 5.
**Mar 30:** Univ de Chile 1 Huachipato 0.
**Mar 31:** Puerto Montt 1 Everton 3; Cobresal 1 Univ Catolica 1; Dep Concepcion 1 O'Higgins 2; Palestino 0 Audax Italiano 2.
**Apr 1:** Antofagasta 0 Union Espanola 1; Lota Schwager 1 Coquimbo Unido 3; Nublense 2 Univ de Concepcion 0; Santiago Wanderers 1 Cobreloa 1.
**Apr 3:** Huachipato 2 Dep La Serena 1; O'Higgins 4 Palestino 1.
**Apr 4:** Cobreloa 1 Nublense 2; Univ de Concepcion 3 Santiago Wanderers 1; Audax Italiano 2 Dep Concepcion 0; Everton 0 Cobresal 0; Univ Catolica 0 Antofagasta 0; Union Espanola 4 Lota Schwager 0.
**Apr 5:** Univ de Chile 3 Dep Melipilla 0; Coquimbo Unido 2 Puerto Montt 0.
**Apr 7:** Univ Catolica 2 Huachipato 0; Palestino 3 Dep La Serena 2.
**Apr 8:** Antofagasta 3 Dep Concepcion 1; Santiago Wanderers 0 Univ de Chile 2; Colo Colo 3 Puerto Montt 0; Coquimbo Unido 1 O'Higgins 2; Nublense 3 Audax Italiano 2; Univ de Concepcion 0 Union Espanola 2; Lota Schwager 2 Everton 0; Dep Melipilla 2 Cobreloa 1.
**Apr 11:** Dep La Serena 1 Colo Colo 1.
**Apr 14:** Union Espanola 1 Palestino 1; Puerto Montt 0 Lota Schwager 1; Dep Concepcion 1 Cobresal 1; O'Higgins 4 Univ de Concepcion 2.
**Apr 15:** Everton 0 Colo Colo 3; Cobreloa 5 Coquimbo Unido 1; Dep La Serena 2 Dep Melipilla 1; Audax Italiano 1 Univ Catolica 3; Univ de Chile 1 Nublense 1; Huachipato 3 Antofagasta 1.
**Apr 21:** Colo Colo 6 O'Higgins 2; Coquimbo Unido 0 Everton 1; Lota Schwager 1 Huachipato 2; Santiago Wanderers 1 Audax Italiano 2.
**Apr 22:** Dep Concepcion 3 Union Espanola 2; Dep Melipilla 3 Univ de Concepcion 2; Palestino 1 Univ de Chile 1; Univ Catolica 2 Cobreloa 1; Antofagasta 4 Dep La Serena 1; Cobresal 1 Puerto Montt 0.
**Apr 28:** Palestino 4 Antofagasta 1; O'Higgins 0 Nublense 1; Cobresal 6 Lota Schwager 0; Everton 2 Dep Melipilla 2; Union Espanola 1 Coquimbo Unido 2; Univ de Concepcion 2 Univ Catolica 4.
**Apr 29:** Audax Italiano 2 Cobreloa 0; Dep La Serena 2 Santiago Wanderers 1; Puerto Montt 3 Dep Concepcion 1; Univ de Chile 0 Colo Colo 0.
**May 2:** Antofagasta 1 Univ de Chile 1.

**CHILE – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colo Colo | 14 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 37 | 9 | 36 |
| Univ Catolica | 14 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 23 | 10 | 31 |
| Audax Italiano | 13 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 25 | 15 | 27 |
| Huachipato | 14 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 21 | 14 | 26 |
| Cobreloa | 14 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 34 | 15 | 25 |
| Nublense | 14 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 21 | 16 | 25 |
| U Espanola | 15 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 25 | 19 | 24 |
| Everton | 15 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 17 | 19 | 20 |
| O'Higgins | 14 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 25 | 29 | 20 |
| Dep Melipilla | 14 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 23 | 22 | 19 |
| Cobresal | 14 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 19 | 16 | 18 |
| Univ de Chile | 13 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 7 | 18 |
| Dep La Serena | 14 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 17 | 22 | 16 |
| Palestino | 14 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 19 | 23 | 15 |
| Antofagasta | 15 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 16 | 26 | 15 |
| U Concepcion | 14 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 20 | 25 | 14 |
| Coquimbo U'do | 15 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 16 | 28 | 14 |
| D Concepcion | 14 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 26 | 12 |
| Puerto Montt | 14 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 14 | 27 | 11 |
| L Schwager | 14 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 19 | 37 | 10 |
| S Wanderers* | 14 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 21 | 7 |

**3pts deducted for not paying players on time*

## COLOMBIA

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 31:** At Nacional 2 Indep Medellin 2.
**Apr 1:** Dep Pasto 2 La Equidad 0; At Junior 2 Real Cartagena 2; Bucaramanga 1 Cucuta 2; America 0 Dep Cali 2; Tolima 1 At Huila 2; Quindio 1 Chico 2; Pereira 0 Once Caldas 0; Millonarios 4 Indep Santa Fe 2.
**Apr 7:** Millonarios 2 Tolima 0.
**Apr 8:** At Huila 1 Pereira 0; Quindio 2 At Nacional 1; Indep Medellin 2 La Equidad 1; Dep Cali 2 Chico 2; Real Cartagena 2 Indep Santa Fe 1; Once Caldas 2 America 3; Cucuta 2 Bucaramanga 0; Dep Pasto 1 At Junior 1.
**Apr 11:** At Huila 2 Real Cartagena 0; America 0 Quindio 0; At Junior 1 Millonarios 1; At Nacional 1 Dep Pasto 1; La Equidad 0 Dep Cali 1; Bucaramanga 0 Once Caldas 0; Chico 1 Cucuta 0; Indep Santa Fe 2 Indep Medellin 4.
**Apr 12:** Pereira 2 Tolima 0.
**Apr 14:** Millonarios 0 At Nacional 1.
**Apr 15:** Dep Cali 1 Indep Santa Fe 1; Once Caldas 1 Chico 0; Real Cartagena 1 Pereira 1; Dep Pasto 2 America 2; Cucuta 3 La Equidad 1; Quindio 1 Bucaramanga 1; Indep Medellin 1 At Huila 3; Tolima 2 At Junior 1.
**Apr 18:** Indep Santa Fe 2 America 0.
**Apr 21:** Indep Santa Fe 3 Cucuta 3.
**Apr 22:** America 2 Millonarios 2; Pereira 0 At Junior 1; La Equidad 0 Once Caldas 0; At Huila 1 Dep Cali 0; Chico 3 Quindio 0; Real Cartagena 2 Indep Medellin 2; Bucaramanga 1 Dep Pasto 0; At Nacional 1 Tolima 0.
**Apr 25:** Quindio 0 La Equidad 0; Dep Pasto 1 Chico 1; Once Caldas 0 Indep Santa Fe 1; Millonarios 2 Bucaramanga 1; Indep Medellin 0 Pereira 0; At Junior 2 At Nacional 1; Cucuta 2 At Huila 0; Dep Cali 4 Real Cartagena 1.
**Apr 26:** Tolima 6 America 0.
**Apr 28:** Chico 1 Millonarios 0.
**Apr 29:** At Huila 3 Once Caldas 2; Real Cartagena 1 Cucuta 0; Bucaramanga 3 Tolima 1; America 3 At Junior 1; Indep Santa Fe 0 Quindio 0; Pereira 0 At Nacional 2; Indep Medellin 3 Dep Cali 3; La Equidad 2 Dep Pasto 3.
**May 2:** Tolima 2 Chico 0; Quindio 1 At Huila 0; Dep Pasto 0 Indep Santa Fe 1; Once Caldas 2 Real Cartagena 1; Millonarios 1 La Equidad 0; At Junior 0 Bucaramanga 0; Cucuta 0 Indep Medellin 1; Dep Cali 2 Pereira 1; At Nacional 4 America 0.

**COLOMBIA – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dep Cali | 16 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 29 | 17 | 30 |
| Cucuta | 16 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 26 | 15 | 30 |
| At Nacional | 16 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 27 | 17 | 29 |
| Chico | 16 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 18 | 13 | 27 |
| Indep Santa Fe | 16 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 18 | 26 |
| At Huila | 16 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 22 | 19 | 25 |
| Millonarios | 16 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 21 | 16 | 24 |
| Bucaramanga | 16 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 18 | 15 | 24 |
| Indep Medellin | 16 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 28 | 31 | 23 |
| At Junior | 16 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 20 | 22 | 22 |
| Tolima | 16 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 24 | 22 | 20 |
| Dep Pasto | 16 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 17 | 19 | 20 |
| Quindio | 16 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 14 | 18 | 17 |
| Once Caldas | 16 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 16 | 22 | 17 |
| Real Cartagena | 16 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 14 | 21 | 16 |
| America | 16 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 20 | 32 | 16 |
| Pereira | 16 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 13 | 20 | 12 |
| La Equidad | 16 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 25 | 9 |

## ECUADOR

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 30:** Dep Azogues 1 Emelec 2.
**Mar 31:** El Nacional 3 Macara 0.
**Apr 1:** Barcelona 1 Dep Cuenca 1; Imbabura 1 Dep Quito 2.
**Apr 6:** Macara 2 Dep Azogues 4.
**Apr 7:** Emelec 1 Imbabura 1.
**Apr 8:** LDU Quito 3 El Nacional 3; Dep Cuenca 1 Olmedo 0; Dep Quito 0 Barcelona 0.
**Apr 13:** Olmedo 0 Dep Cuenca 3; El Nacional 3 LDU Quito 1.
**Apr 14:** Imbabura 2 Emelec 1; Dep Azogues 3 Macara 1; Barcelona 3 Dep Quito 1.
**Apr 18:** Olmedo 1 LDU Quito 0.
**Apr 20:** Dep Cuenca 1 Barcelona 0.
**Apr 22:** Dep Quito 2 Imbabura 3; LDU Quito 1 Olmedo 3; Macara 3 El Nacional 2.
**Apr 25:** Emelec 1 Dep Azogues 2.
**Apr 29:** Dep Azogues 1 Dep Quito 0; Macara 3 Emelec 1; El Nacional 2 Dep Cuenca 1; Barcelona 1 Olmedo 0; Imbabura 1 LDU Quito 6.

**ECUADOR – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dep Azogues | 12 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 20 | 14 | 24 |
| Olmedo | 12 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 17 | 11 | 23 |
| Dep Cuenca | 12 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 15 | 11 | 20 |
| El Nacional | 12 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 23 | 18 | 17 |
| Barcelona | 12 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 13 | 14 | 16 |
| LDU Quito | 12 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 24 | 21 | 15 |
| Dep Quito | 12 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 17 | 15 |
| Imbabura | 12 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 16 | 23 | 14 |
| Macara | 12 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 17 | 24 | 13 |
| Emelec | 12 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 13 | 20 | 10 |

## PARAGUAY

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 28:** Cerro Porteno 1 Libertad 2.
**Mar 31:** Cerro Porteno 3 3 de Febrero 1.
**Apr 1:** Libertad 3 2 de Mayo 0; Nacional 0 Guarani 0; Sportivo Luq

**Apr 21:** Olimpia 0 Cerro Porteno 1; Sportivo Trinidense 2 3 de Febrero 2.
**Apr 22:** 12 de Octubre 3 Libertad 3; Guarani 3 2 de Mayo 3; Sol de America 2 Sportivo Luqueno 4.
**Apr 27:** Libertad 2 Tacuary 0.
**Apr 28:** Nacional 1 Sol de America 0; Cerro Porteno 2 Guarani 1.
**Apr 29:** Sportivo Luqueno 2 Olimpia 2; 3 de Febrero 1 12 de Octubre 2; 2 de Mayo 3 Sportivo Trinidense 0.
**May 2:** 12 de Octubre 0 Cerro Porteno 2.

**PARAGUAY – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cerro Porteno | 11 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 27 | 8 | 27 |
| Libertad | 11 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 18 | 9 | 22 |
| S Luqueno | 11 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 21 | 15 | 19 |
| Olimpia | 11 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 16 | 15 | 16 |
| 3 de Febrero | 11 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 12 | 13 | 16 |
| Nacional | 11 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 13 | 12 | 14 |
| Tacuary | 11 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 13 | 14 |
| 2 de Mayo | 11 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 14 | 17 | 13 |
| 12 de Octubre | 11 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 19 | 12 |
| S Trinidense | 11 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 15 | 23 | 10 |
| Guarani | 11 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 15 | 18 | 8 |
| Sol de America | 11 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 23 | 6 |

## PERU

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 31:** Total Clean 2 Sport Boys 1; Coronel Bolognesi 3 Sporting Cristal 1.
**Apr 1:** Dep Municipal 2 Alianza Lima 2; Universitario 0 Universidad SMP 3; Alianza Atletico 2 Cienciano 2.
**Apr 7:** Sporting Cristal 4 Total Clean 1; Sport Boys 2 Dep Municipal 0; Melgar 2 Coronel Bolognesi 5; Alianza Lima 2 Alianza Atletico 0.
**Apr 8:** Cienciano 0 Universitario 1.
**Apr 11:** Universitario 1 Total Clean 1; Universidad SMP 1 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Melgar 0 Dep Municipal 1; Sport Boys 2 Alianza Lima 1.
**Apr 12:** Sporting Cristal 1 Alianza Atletico 1.
**Apr 14:** Total Clean 2 Universidad SMP 3; Alianza Lima 1 Melgar 1.
**Apr 15:** Alianza Atletico 0 Sport Boys 0; Coronel Bolognesi 2 Cienciano 3; Dep Municipal 1 Sporting Cristal 2.
**Apr 18:** Universidad SMP 0 Cienciano 2.
**Apr 21:** Sport Ancash 2 Coronel Bolognesi 0 (awarded); Universitario 0 Dep Municipal 2; Sporting Cristal 1 Sport Boys 3.
**Apr 22:** Cienciano 2 Total Clean 2; Universidad SMP 2 Alianza Lima 0; Melgar 1 Alianza Atletico 0.
**Apr 25:** Sport Ancash 4 Sport Boys 1.
**Apr 28:** Coronel Bolognesi 2 Universitario 3; Total Clean 3 Sport Ancash 2.
**Apr 29:** Dep Municipal 1 Cienciano 1; Alianza Atletico 2 Universidad SMP 2; Alianza Lima 1 Sporting Cristal 1; Sport Boys 4 Melgar 4.
**May 1:** Coronel Bolognesi 1 Total Clean 3.
**May 2:** Cienciano 0 Alianza Lima 0; Universitario 3 Alianza Atletico 1; Melgar 2 Sporting Cristal 0; Universidad SMP 4 Sport Boys 0; Sport Ancash 3 Dep Municipal 0.

**PERU – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Univ SMP | 15 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 28 | 18 | 27 |
| Melgar | 15 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 26 | 25 | 27 |
| Cienciano | 15 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 24 | 16 | 24 |
| Alianza Lima | 16 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 24 | 18 | 24 |
| Sport Boys | 16 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 24 | 23 | 23 |
| Alianza Atletico | 16 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 17 | 16 | 22 |
| Universitario | 15 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| Sporting Cristal | 15 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 21 | 24 | 18 |
| Sport Ancash | 11 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 17 | 10 | 16 |
| Dep Municipal | 16 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 19 | 25 | 16 |
| C Bolognesi | 16 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 20 | 31 | 15 |
| Total Clean | 16 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 20 | 34 | 14 |

## URUGUAY

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 31:** Wanderers 2 Nacional 1; Rampla Juniors 0 Progreso 2.
**Apr 1:** River Plate 1 Danubio 2; Liverpool 2 Cerrito 2; Defensor 1 Bella Vista 0; Penarol 1 Miramar Misiones 1.
**Apr 7:** Bella Vista 2 Penarol 5; Danubio 5 Rentistas 1; Tacuarembo 0 Wanderers 0; Miramar Misiones 2 River Plate 3.
**Apr 8:** Nacional 3 Rocha 0; Progreso 2 Liverpool 1; Cerrito 0 Defensor 3; Central Espanol 0 Rampla Juniors 1.
**Apr 11:** Rocha 0 Central Espanol 1; Rentistas 1 Tacuarembo 2.
**Apr 14:** Rocha 1 Tacuarembo 0.
**Apr 15:** Wanderers 2 Danubio 0; Rentistas 1 Miramar Misiones 2; River Plate 3 Bella Vista 1; Defensor 3 Progreso 2; Liverpool 2 Central Espanol 0; Rampla Juniors 1 Nacional 3.
**Apr 18:** Penarol 4 Cerrito 2.
**Apr 21:** Progreso 0 Penarol 1; Danubio 3 Rocha 0; Bella Vista 3 Rentistas 2.
**Apr 22:** Nacional 2 Liverpool 1; Cerrito 0 River Plate 0; Tacuarembo 3 Rampla Juniors 3; Miramar Misiones 1 Wanderers 4; Central Espanol 0 Defensor 3.
**Apr 25:** Defensor 3 Nacional 0; Liverpool 2 Tacuarembo 0; River Plate 2 Progreso 4; Rampla Juniors 0 Danubio 1; Penarol 1 Central Espanol 2; Rocha 1 Miramar Misiones 0; Wanderers 3 Bella Vista 1.
**Apr 26:** Rentistas 2 Cerrito 1.
**Apr 28:** Danubio 2 Liverpool 0; Tacuarembo 0 Defensor 0.
**Apr 29:** Cerrito 2 Wanderers 0; Central Espanol 1 River Plate 1; Progreso 0 Rentistas 0; Nacional 0 Penarol 3; Bella Vista 4 Rocha 0; Miramar Misiones 0 Rampla Juniors 1.

**URUGUAY – CLOSING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Danubio | 13 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 24 | 9 | 29 |
| Penarol | 13 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 30 | 17 | 28 |
| Defensor | 13 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 29 | 16 | 28 |
| Wanderers | 13 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 27 | 17 | 23 |
| River Plate | 13 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 24 | 20 | 19 |
| Progreso | 13 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 21 | 17 | 18 |
| Tacuarembo | 13 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 21 | 17 | 18 |
| Bella Vista | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 20 | 20 | 17 |
| Liverpool | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 20 | 21 | 17 |
| M Misiones | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 17 | 18 | 17 |
| Nacional | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 13 | 20 | 17 |
| Rampla Jnrs | 13 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 16 | 22 | 14 |
| Cerrito | 13 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 23 | 11 |
| Rentistas | 13 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 17 | 27 | 10 |
| Rocha | 13 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 22 | 10 |
| C Espanol | 13 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 20 | 9 |

## VENEZUELA

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 31:** Trujillanos 1 UA Maracaibo 3.
**Apr 1:** Aragua 0 Monagas 1; Dep Tachira 2 Zamora 2; Portuguesa 0 Carabobo 0.
**Apr 8:** Aragua 2 Caracas 2; UA Maracaibo 2 Zamora 1.
**Apr 11:** Caracas 2 Trujillanos 0; Dep Tachira 0 UA Maracaibo 0.
**Apr 14:** UA Maracaibo 3 Mineros Guayana 2.
**Apr 15:** Monagas 1 Trujillanos 0; Carabobo 1 Dep Tachira 0; Zamora 1 Aragua 0; Caracas 1 Portuguesa 0.
**Apr 18:** Mineros Guayana 1 Caracas 3.
**Apr 22:** Caracas 1 Carabobo 1; Aragua 2 Dep Tachira 1; Trujillanos 0 Zamora 2; Mineros Guayana 1 Monagas 2; Portuguesa 2 UA Maracaibo 0.
**Apr 25:** UA Maracaibo 4 Portuguesa 0.
**Apr 29:** Carabobo 1 Aragua 3; UA Maracaibo 3 Caracas 1; Monagas 0 Portuguesa 1; Zamora 1 Mineros Guayana 2; Dep Tachira 5 Trujillanos 3.

**VENEZUELA – CLOSING – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UA Maracaibo | 18 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 28 | 19 | 32 |
| Caracas | 18 | 8 | 8 | 2 | 25 | 16 | 32 |
| Mineros G'ana | 18 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 26 | 24 | 27 |
| Zamora | 18 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 24 | 18 | 26 |
| Carabobo | 18 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 17 | 15 | 25 |
| Monagas | 18 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 21 | 21 |
| Aragua | 18 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 18 | 22 | 20 |
| Dep Tachira | 18 | 3 | 10 | 5 | 22 | 24 | 19 |
| Portuguesa | 18 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 19 | 26 | 19 |
| Trujillanos | 18 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 20 | 27 | 17 |

# CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

## CONCACAF CHAMPIONS CUP

### Semi-finals

*1st legs - Mar 15; 2nd legs - Apr 3/5*
DC United (USA) v Guadalajara (Mex)
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Houston Dynamo (USA) v Pachuca (Mex)
2-0, 2-5 (agg 4-5)

### Final, 1st leg

*Apr 18*
**Guadalajara 2** (Bravo 44, 67)
**Pachuca 2** (Cacho 21, Cabrera 82)
**HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Arredondo (Mex)

### Final, 2nd leg

*Apr 25*
**Pachuca 0**
**Guadalajara 0**
*Aet.* **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
*Agg 2-2. Pachuca 7-6 on pens*

## MEXICO

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mar 31:** Atlas 1 Cruz Azul 0; Tigres 3 Monterrey 3; Jaguares 1 Santos 1; San Luis 1 Guadalajara 0; Veracruz 0 Pachuca 5; Morelia 0 Necaxa 1.
**Apr 1:** Toluca 2 Atlante 4; America 2 Queretaro 0; Tecos UAG 2 Pumas UNAM 2.
**Apr 4:** Toluca 0 Atlas 0.
**Apr 7:** Queretaro 3 Morelia 1; Atlante 2 Tecos UAG 2; Monterrey 2 Atlas 0; Cruz Azul 4 Veracruz 2; Guadalajara 1 Tigres 0; Necaxa 1 San Luis 2.
**Apr 8:** Pumas UNAM 1 America 1; Santos 2 Toluca 1; Pachuca 3 Jaguares 0.
**Apr 11:** Tigres 2 Pachuca 0; Guadalajara 2 Tecos UAG 2.
**Apr 14:** San Luis 1 Queretaro 0; Tigres 1 Necaxa 1; Atlas 0 Guadalajara 2; Morelia 2 Pumas UNAM 1; Jaguares 2 Cruz Azul 2; Veracruz 0 Monterrey 0.
**Apr 15:** Santos 3 Atlante 0; America 2 Tecos UAG 1; Toluca 0 Pachuca 2.
**Apr 21:** Queretaro 2 Tigres 1; Guadalajara 4 Veracruz 0; Monterrey 2 Jaguares 0; Pachuca 1 Santos 0; Cruz Azul 0 Toluca 0; Necaxa 2 Atlas 1.
**Apr 22:** Tecos UAG 4 Morelia 0; Pumas UNAM 1 San Luis 1; America 1 Atlante 0.
**Apr 28:** Morelia 2 America 1; San Luis 0 Tecos UAG 2; Tigres 1 Pumas UNAM 1; Veracruz 1 Necaxa 1; Jaguares 1 Guadalajara 0; Atlante 1 Pachuca 4.
**Apr 29:** Toluca 1 Monterrey 0; Atlas 2 Queretaro 0; Santos 2 Cruz Azul 0.

**MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guadalajara | 17 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 27 | 14 | 31 |
| Cruz Azul | 17 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 22 | 17 | 28 |
| Atlas | 17 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 20 | 17 | 25 |
| Queretaro | 17 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 19 |
| Jaguares | 17 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 26 | 19 |
| Necaxa | 17 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 19 | 26 | 18 |

**GROUP 2 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pachuca | 17 | 12 | 3 | 2 | 36 | 12 | 39 |
| Tecos UAG | 17 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 30 | 23 | 25 |
| San Luis | 17 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 21 | 23 | 24 |
| Atlante | 17 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 21 | 27 | 21 |
| Monterrey | 17 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 17 | 23 | 19 |
| Veracruz | 17 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 11 | 33 | 12 |

**GROUP 3 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| America | 17 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 26 | 15 | 30 |
| Tigres | 17 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 17 | 20 | 23 |
| Santos | 17 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 21 | 20 | 22 |
| Morelia | 17 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 23 | 25 | 22 |
| Pumas UNAM | 17 | 3 | 11 | 3 | 19 | 18 | 20 |
| Toluca | 17 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 15 | 17 | 19 |

*Top two in each group qualified for quarter-finals. All the third-placed sides and the fourth-placed side with most points entered qualifying play-offs to determine the last two quarter-finalists*

## UNITED STATES

**Apr 7:** Colorado Rapids 2 DC United 1; Chivas USA 2 Toronto FC 0; Chicago Fire 1 New England Revolution 0; Columbus Crew 0 New York Red Bulls 0; Real Salt Lake 2 FC Dallas 2.
**Apr 8:** Houston Dynamo 0 Los Angeles Galaxy 0.
**Apr 12:** Los Angeles Galaxy 1 FC Dallas 2.
**Apr 14:** Houston Dynamo 1 Chivas USA 0; New England Revolution 4 Toronto FC 0; DC United 2 Kansas City Wizards 4; Real Salt Lake 0 Columbus Crew 0.
**Apr 15:** Colorado Rapids 1 Chicago Fire 1; New York Red Bulls 3 FC Dallas 0.
**Apr 19:** Columbus Crew 2 New England Revolution 2.
**Apr 21:** Chivas USA 4 Real Salt Lake 0; Chicago Fire 2 Kansas City Wizards 1; New York Red Bulls 1 Houston Dynamo 0.
**Apr 22:** FC Dallas 3 Colorado Rapids 1.
**Apr 25:** Kansas City Wizards 3 Toronto FC 0.
**Apr 26:** FC Dallas 0 New York Red Bulls 1.
**Apr 28:** Columbus Crew 1 DC United 0; Toronto FC 0 Kansas City Wizards 1; Los Angeles Galaxy 3 Chivas USA 1.
**Apr 29:** Houston Dynamo 0 Chicago Fire 1; FC Dallas 0 New England Revolution 1.
**Apr 30:** Real Salt Lake 0 Colorado Rapids 2.
**May 3:** DC United 1 New England Revolution 1.

**UNITED STATES – EASTERN CONFERENCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New York | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 10 |
| Chicago Fire | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 10 |
| Kansas City | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 9 |
| New England | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 8 |
| Columbus | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| DC United | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 1 |
| Toronto FC | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 0 |

**WESTERN CONFERENCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| FC Dallas | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 7 |
| Chivas USA | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 |
| LA Galaxy | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Houston | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Real Salt Lake | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 2 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
4 Taylor Twellman (New England Revolution)
3 Andy Dorman (New England Revolution)
3 Eddie Johnson (Kansas City Wizards)

# AFRICA

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

### 2nd round

*1st legs - Apr 6/7/8; 2nd legs - Apr 20/21/22*
ASEC Abidjan (IvC) v Wydad Casablanca (Mor)
2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1)
Cotonsport (Cam) v JS Kabylie (Alg)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Esperance (Tun) v Young Africans (Tan)
3-0, 0-0 (agg 3-0)
Etoile du Congo (Con) v Al Ittihad (Lby)
3-1, 0-2 (agg 3-3; Al Ittihad on away goals)
Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) v Al Ahly (Egy)
2-2, 0-2 (agg 2-4)
Maranatha (Tog) v Etoile Sahel (Tun)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Nasarawa United (Nig) v Al Hilal (Sud)
3-0, 0-3 (agg 3-3; Al Hilal 3-2 on pens)
TP Mazembe (DRC) v FAR Rabat (Mor)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)

*Winners enter group stage; losers enter Confederation Cup*

## CONFEDERATION CUP

### 2nd round

*1st legs - Apr 6/7/8; 2nd legs - Apr 18/21/22*
ASO Chlef (Alg) v Al Merreikh (Sud)
1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3)
ATRACO (Rwa) v EGS Gafsa (Tun)
2-2, 1-1 (agg 3-3; EGS Gafsa on away goals)
Benfica Luanda (Ang) v Astres (Cam)
3-0, 1-1 (agg 4-1)
Dolphin (Nig) v HUS Agadir (Mor)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1; Dolphin 5-3 on pens)
Etoile Filante (BuF) v Mwana Africa (Zim)
2-0, 0-3 (agg 2-3)
Ismaili (Egy) v Green Buffaloes (Zam)
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
Issia Wazi (IvC) v CS Sfaxien (Tun)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Union Douala (Cam) v Kwara United (Nig)
1-1, 2-3 (agg 3-4)





# ASIA

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**Group A**
**Apr 11:** Al Arabi (Kuw) 1 Al Rayyan (Qat) 1; Al Zawra'a (Irq) 1 Al Wahda (UAE) 2.
**Apr 25:** Al Rayyan 1 Al Arabi 3; Al Wahda 1 Al Zawra'a 1.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Wahda | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 10 |
| Al Zawra'a | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Al Arabi | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| Al Rayyan | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 |

**Group B**
**Apr 11:** Pakhtakor (Uzb) 0 Al Hilal (Sau) 2.
**Apr 25:** Al Hilal 2 Pakhtakor 0.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Hilal | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Pakhtakor | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Al Kuwait (Kuw) | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |

*Esteghlal (Irn) excluded for failing to submit player list in time*

**Group C**
**Apr 11:** Al Sadd (Qat) 2 Neftchi (Uzb) 0; Al Karama (Syr) 1 Al Najaf (Irq) 1.
**Apr 25:** Neftchi 2 Al Sadd 1; Al Najaf 2 Al Karama 4.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neftchi | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Al Karama | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 7 |
| Al Najaf | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Al Sadd | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 3 |

**Group D**
**Apr 11:** Al Ain (UAE) 3 Sepahan (Irn) 2; Al Shabab (Sau) 4 Al Ittihad (Syr) 0.
**Apr 25:** Sepahan 1 Al Ain 1; Al Ittihad 1 Al Shabab 1.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sepahan | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Al Shabab | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 7 |
| Al Ain | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Al Ittihad | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 2 |

**Group E**
**Apr 11:** Urawa Reds (Jap) 1 Shanghai Shenhua (Chn) 0.
**Apr 12:** Persik Kediri (Ins) 2 Sydney FC (Aus) 1.
**Apr 25:** Shanghai Shenhua 0 Urawa Reds 0; Sydney FC 3 Persik Kediri 0.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Urawa Reds | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Sydney FC | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| Persik Kediri | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| Shanghai | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 |

**Group F**
**Apr 11:** Bangkok University (Tha) 0 Arema Malang (Ins) 0; Chunnam Dragons (SKo) 1 Kawasaki Frontale (Jap) 3.
**Apr 25:** Arema Malang 1 Bangkok University 0; Kawasaki Frontale 3 Chunnam Dragons 0.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kawasaki | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 10 |
| Chunnam | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| Arema Malang | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Bangkok Univ | 4 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

**Group G**
**Apr 11:** Shandong Luneng (Chn) 4 Dong Tam Long An (Vie) 0; Adelaide United (Aus) 2 Songnam Ilhwa (SKo) 2.
**Apr 25:** Dong Tam Long An 2 Shandong Luneng 3; Songnam Ilhwa 1 Adelaide United 0.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shandong | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 12 |
| Songnam | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| Adelaide | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Dong Tam | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 13 | 0 |

*Group winners qualify for quarter-finals. Bye to quarter-finals: Chonbuk Motors (SKo; holders)*

## AFC CUP

**Group A**
**Apr 10:** Al Saqr (Yem) 2 Muscat (Oma) 2; Shabab Al Ordun (Jor) 2 Al Nijmeh (Leb) 0.
**Apr 24:** Al Nijmeh 2 Shabab Al Ordun 1; Muscat 2 Al Saqr 0.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S Al Ordun | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 |
| Al Nijmeh | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Muscat | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Al Saqr | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 1 |

**Group B**
**Apr 10:** MTTU (Tkm) 1 Al Wihdat (Jor) 2; Al Muharraq (Bah) 2 Al Hilal (Yem) 1.
**Apr 24:** Al Hilal 1 Al Muharraq 1; Al Wihdat 4 MTTU 2.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Wihdat | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 7 | 8 |
| Al Muharraq | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| MTTU | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 3 |
| Al Hilal | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 2 |

**Group C**
**Apr 10:** Al Ansar (Leb) 0 Al Faisaly (Jor) 2; Dhofar (Oma) 1 Nebitchi (Tkm) 0.
**Apr 24:** Nebitchi 0 Dhofar 1; Al Faisaly 1 Al Ansar 1.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Faisaly | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| Dhofar | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Al Ansar | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Nebitchi | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 |

**Group D**
**Apr 10:** Victory (Mdv) 2 Hoa Pat (Vie) 2; Sun Hei (HK) 2 Negeri Sembilan (Mly) 0.
**Apr 24:** Negeri Sembilan 1 Sun Hei 0; Hoa Pat 0 Victory 2.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sun Hei | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 |
| Victory | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Negeri S | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Hoa Pat | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 2 |

**Group E**
**Apr 10:** Mahindra United (Ind) 3 Happy Valley (HK) 1; Armed Forces (Sin) 3 New Radiant (Mdv) 1.
**Apr 24:** New Radiant 2 Armed Forces 3; Happy Valley 2 Mahindra United 1.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mahindra Utd | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 9 |
| Armed Forces | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 6 | 9 |
| Happy Valley | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 6 |
| New Radiant | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 0 |

**Group F**
**Apr 10:** Pahang (Mly) 1 Tampines Rovers (Sin) 4; Osotpa M-150 (Tha) 0 Mohun Bagan (Ind) 0.
**Apr 24:** Mohun Bagan 1 Osotpa M-150 0; Tampines Rovers 2 Pahang 0.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tampines Rvrs | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Mohun Bagan | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Osotpa M-150 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Pahang | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 12 | 0 |

*Group winners and the two runners-up with the best records qualify for quarter-finals*

## CHINA

**Mar 31:** Changchun Yatai 3 Liaoning 2; Xian Chanba 2 Zhejiang Lucheng 0; Tianjin Teda 0 Dalian Shide 1.
**Apr 1:** Henan Jianye 1 Shandong Luneng 1; Shenyang Ginde 2 Qingdao Zhongneng 1; Shanghai Shenhua 3 Wuhan Guanggu 1; Beijing Guoan 1 Shenzhen Kingway 1.
**Apr 7:** Shandong Luneng 4 Shenyang Ginde 2; Qingdao Zhongneng 1 Changchun Yatai 2; Shenzhen Kingway 0 Shanghai Shenhua 1; Liaoning 1 Xian Chanba 0; Zhejiang Lucheng 1 Tianjin Teda 3.
**Apr 8:** Wuhan Guanggu 2 Henan Jianye 0; Xiamen Lanshi 1 Beijing Guoan 2.
**Apr 14:** Changchun Yatai 1 Shenyang Ginde 0; Tianjin Teda 1 Liaoning 0.
**Apr 15:** Henan Jianye 0 Shenzhen Kingway 0; Xian Chanba 1 Qingdao Zhongneng 3; Shanghai Shenhua 1 Xiamen Lanshi 0; Beijing Guoan 3 Dalian Shide 1; Wuhan Guanggu 3 Shandong Luneng 2.
**Apr 21:** Shandong Luneng 1 Changchun Yatai 1; Shenzhen Kingway 2 Wuhan Guanggu 1; Zhejiang Lucheng 0 Beijing Guoan 0; Dalian Shide 2 Shanghai Shenhua 1.
**Apr 22:** Xiamen Lanshi 0 Henan Jianye 0; Qingdao Zhongneng 1 Tianjin Teda 0; Shenyang Ginde 0 Xian Chanba 0.
**Apr 28:** Xian Chanba 0 Changchun Yatai 1; Tianjin Teda 2 Shenyang Ginde 0.
**Apr 29:** Wuhan Guanggu 1 Xiamen Lanshi 1; Henan Jianye 2 Dalian Shide 1; Beijing Guoan 3 Liaoning 0; Shenzhen Kingway 0 Shandong Luneng 1; Shanghai Shenhua 1 Zhejiang Lucheng 1.

**CHINA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beijing | 8 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 11 | 3 | 16 |
| Tianjin | 8 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 5 | 16 |
| Changchun | 8 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 8 | 16 |
| Shandong | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 17 | 10 | 14 |
| Shanghai | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 14 |
| Dalian | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 13 |
| Qingdao | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
| Wuhan | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Henan | 7 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| Shenyang | 8 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 12 | 7 |
| Xian | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| Shenzhen | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| Zhejiang | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 6 |
| Liaoning | 7 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 14 | 6 |
| Xiamen | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 5 |

## JAPAN

**Mar 31:** Ventforet Kofu 1 Gamba Osaka 2; Albirex Niigata 2 Kawasaki Frontale 0; Jubilo Iwata 1 JEF United 0; Omiya Ardija 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 2; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Yokohama F Marinos 3; Kashiwa Reysol 2 FC Tokyo 0; Vissel Kobe 1 Kashima Antlers 1.
**Apr 1:** Yokohama FC 1 Nagoya Grampus Eight 2; Oita Trinita 2 Urawa Reds 2.
**Apr 7:** Ventforet Kofu 4 Vissel Kobe 3; FC Tokyo 1 Albirex Niigata 3; Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 3; Gamba Osaka 2 Kawasaki Frontale 2; Kashima Antlers 0 Omiya Ardija 0; Yokohama F Marinos 0 Kashiwa Reysol 2; Urawa Reds 2 Jubilo Iwata 1.
**Apr 8:** JEF United 4 Yokohama FC 0; Shimizu S-Pulse 2 Oita Trinita 0.
**Apr 14:** Omiya Ardija 1 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0; Yokohama FC 0 Kashima Antlers 1; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2 Ventforet Kofu 2; Albirex Niigata 2 Gamba Osaka 1; Vissel Kobe 2 JEF United 1; Jubilo Iwata 1 Yokohama F Marinos 0.
**Apr 15:** Kashiwa Reysol 0 Urawa Reds 2; Kawasaki Frontale 2 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Oita Trinita 0 FC Tokyo 0.
**Apr 21:** FC Tokyo 1 Yokohama FC 0; Urawa Reds 1 Kawasaki Frontale 2; JEF United 1 Omiya Ardija 0; Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 Vissel Kobe 0; Ventforet Kofu 3 Kashiwa Reysol 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Kashima Antlers 2; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 Albirex Niigata 0.
**Apr 22:** Yokohama F Marinos 5 Oita Trinita 0; Gamba Osaka 5 Jubilo Iwata 2.
**Apr 28:** Yokohama FC 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Oita Trinita 0 Gamba Osaka 4; Omiya Ardija 1 Ventforet Kofu 2; Kashiwa Reysol 2 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0; Vissel Kobe 0 FC Tokyo 0; Albirex Niigata 0 Yokohama F Marinos 6; Jubilo Iwata 4 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2.
**Apr 29:** Kawasaki Frontale 1 JEF United 1; Kashima Antlers 0 Urawa Reds 1.
**May 3:** Urawa Reds 1 JEF United 1; Ventforet Kofu 1 Yokohama FC 0; Kashiwa Reysol 0 Albirex Niigata 0; FC Tokyo 1 Kashima Antlers 2; Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Oita Trinita 2; Vissel Kobe 2 Gamba Osaka 2; Sanfrec

# #3 The winger: Cristiano Ronaldo

## The Portuguese starlet was judged best by his peers

**● CONSISTENCY**
"It's the key to his outstanding season. Game in, game out, he has been playing at a consistently high standard. He's more in charge of his emotions on the pitch and has gained in effectiveness as a maker of chances and goalscorer."

**● TOTAL PACKAGE**
"Everything is there in one special body and mind: the fantasy, creativity, speed, shooting, heading, physique and athleticism. What's more, all these assets are in harmony. That makes him incredibly special."

**● PERSONALITY**
"Mentally, he is extremely durable, much more than he is usually given credit for. He's endured a lot of criticism in the media but he hasn't let it affect him. In fact, he's come out the other side so much stronger. He has let his football speak up for him. He has the force of character to stay at the top for the next 10 years."

**● TECHNIQUE**
"Never in all my time in football have I seen someone with his extraordinary technical ability, and I've worked with Zidane, Raul, Figo and Ronaldo. Some of the feats he achieves with a ball leave me speechless. He has gifts which are given to only a chosen few. He's unique."

Carlos Queiroz, Manchester United's assistant manager, on Cristiano Ronaldo

## WHAT THEY SAID

**IKER CASILLAS** (REAL MADRID)
"Cristiano Ronaldo [Manchester United] has it all: speed, dribbling skills, he's a great passer and he scores goals."

**CESC FABREGAS** (ARSENAL)
"Cristiano Ronaldo's dribbling is great and he invites fouls."

**RICARDO CARVALHO** (CHELSEA)
"With his pace, Cristiano Ronaldo is capable of passing anyone."

**XABI ALONSO** (LIVERPOOL)
"Cristiano Ronaldo passes players with ease, invites fouls and creates space for his team-mates."

**GABRIEL HEINZE** (MANCHESTER UNITED)
"Cristiano Ronaldo is in a great patch of form right now. He can dribble around his own shadow."

**FREDERIC KANOUTE** (SEVILLA)
"Cristiano Ronaldo is unique on the ball and can dribble with both feet. He forces defenders to make a lot of mistakes."

**MIKEL ARTETA** (EVERTON)
"Cristiano Ronaldo is the best at the moment; it is almost impossible for an opponent to stop him fairly."

**YOANN GOURCUFF** (MILAN)
"Mancini [Roma] is excellent at provoking defenders, making them think they can dispossess him, then manoeuvring the ball out of their reach."

**OWEN HARGREAVES** (BAYERN MUNICH)
"Ze Roberto [Santos] is one of the most talented players I've ever seen. He's an expert at making space to put in a cross."

**LUCIO** (BAYERN MUNICH)
"Cristiano Ronaldo should be Brazilian. He has more tricks than anyone could dream up, he flies down the wing."

**CLAUDIO PIZARRO** (BAYERN MUNICH)
"I like Arjen Robben [Chelsea]. He has a simple philosophy: give me a duel with a full-back and let's see who is the strongest."

**GAEL GIVET** (MONACO)
"Ludovic Giuly [Barcelona] is a constant menace for a full-back. Whether you stay tight or drop off him, he has the explosive pace, touch and inventiveness to embarrass you."

**CHRISTOPH METZELDER** (BORUSSIA DORTMUND)
"Luis Figo [Internazionale] is not as quick as he was but remains a very slippery customer because of his sharp mind and outstanding technique."

**ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC** (INTERNAZIONALE)
"Cristiano Ronaldo is the best of the bunch at the moment. I'm like most fans. I'm excited by players who do the unexpected and play the game with flair and daring."

**PAULETA** (PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN)
"Besides his incredible balance and quick feet, what I like about Franck Ribery [Marseille] is his unselfishness. Wingers can sometimes play to the gallery but Ribery is a proper team man."

**THE VOTES**
9...Cristiano Ronaldo
1...Figo, Giuly, Mancini, Ribery, Robben, Ze Roberto

Next month: The captain
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**JIMMY GREAVES**
Spurs & England, tv presenter

**GEOFF CAPES**
World's Strongest Man

**2003 ENGLAND RUGBY WORLD CUP REUNION**
*including: Matt Dawson MBE, Steve Thompson MBE, Ben Cohen MBE and more to be announced shortly so keep checking the website!*

**RICARDO VILLA**
Spurs & Argentina player

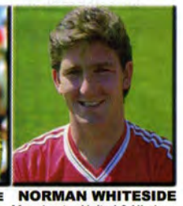
**STEVE PERRYMAN MBE**
Spurs Captain

**MATT LE TISSIER**
Southampton & England

**DEAN HOLDSWORTH**
Wimbledon FC 'Crazy Gang'

**RON 'CHOPPER' HARRIS**
Chelsea Captain

**PAT JENNINGS OBE**
Spurs & Arsenal goalkeeper



**NORMAN WHITESIDE**
Manchester United & NI player

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1981 Grand National winner

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